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MODERN DRAMA IN EUROPE

By STORM JAMESON

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PREFACE

An attempt to reconstruct the dramatic progress of the last half-century might be justified on two grounds. There are indications that the drama of these years is already nearing definite reaction. This makes it possible to regard it as the rise and decline of forces even now ceasing to operate. With this recognition of coming change, a closer study of the period in question discovers lines along which the drama has developed. This essay is the attempt to trace those lines, and to suggest that the history of the drama during the past fifty years has been the history of a swift rise, and a slow descent to disintegration and unproductive repetition.

The dominant dramatic art of the period has taken the form labelled 'realism' in current critical cant; and almost contemporary with this in its origin, there is clearly to be seen a strain of revolt, which has made use of symbolism and of many of the trappings of romance. This spirit of revolt has assisted in the disintegration of the prevailing drama without offering much of value in its place.

The drama moving within the limits of these two forces makes up the larger part of modern European drama. It has moved towards what is now become a state of anarchy, wherein none are daring enough to uphold any standard of values, and the restraint of the artist is overborne in the mass of insignificant production. Such a state of anarchy may be traced to two secondary causes, the nature of which involves

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their co-existence. The first of these is the lack of master-dramatists who possess the power of interpreting life, together with the supreme craftsmanship necessary for a mastery of their art. There are writers of fine plays, of exquisite dramatic verse: supreme dramatists there are not. To the second cause the least critical are not blind: the accompanying lack of any sense of direction or of proportion in contemporary dramatic art. How many plays which claim the name of 'serious drama' demand no more than an interest in the little problems of commonplace individuals? The stage of to-day is crowded by characters whose names we forget, whose features fade away in the indeterminate mass of their herd, and whose deeds, if they accomplish anything, matter not at all for the action of the play or for the revelation of personality. Whence has arisen this conception of drama as the unfolding of small questions of sex, with little of inspiration and with less of beauty, this purposeless effort which seems to be both symptom and warning?

The critics by profession have no standard by which to value the work before them. They do not dare to uphold one, and the discredited law-givers of the eighteenth century have their revenge in the critical anarchy of the present day. To insist upon a scale of values in matters artistic is to come under the suspicion of academic pedantry. There are critics of thought and culture, but for the most part complete lack of a sense of proportion rules the reading and criticising world. Passions are spent haphazard in the name of art: response, nervous, unreasoning response is accorded to the slightest stimulus. As with critic and public so with the artist. He finds it impossible to resist the impulse to write, however feebly, with whatever lack of justification.

These are the most obvious signs of the anarchy to which stage, library, and salon bear witness. The ultimate cause lies deeper, and any attempt to discuss it here would be out of place. But realise the significance of the widespread lack of faith in the possibility of supreme artistic achievement. As in politics, in education, in religion, so in art, indifference and mediocrity weigh on the spirit. All men are equal, all ideas equally worth statement, and all works equally worthy consideration. The clear sight of Matthew Arnold when he wrote of culture is almost as suggestive if for culture we read literature. 'The aspirations of culture, which is the study of perfection, are not satisfied unless what men say, when they may say what they like, is worth saying—has good in it, and more good than bad. . . . Culture indefatigably tries not to make what each raw person may like, the rule by which he fashions himself, but to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is beautiful, graceful, and becoming, and to get the raw person to like that.'

This is the Age of Earthenware, in the drama as in all art, and one half the world are turned potters, taking in any fashion the clay for their moulding: from the problems of Blackheath, the domestic arrangements of Brixton, or the immature passions and ideas of commonplace persons. Hence the existence of such dramas as *Nan*, as Sudermann's *Rosen*, as *The Game* (Harold Brighouse). There are careful dramatists writing to-day, thoughtful novelists and poets, but for the most part, a feverish haste to produce and an incapacity for anything save slavish imitation is more and more pronounced. Man, the valuing, criticising animal, no longer dares to place a value on emotion or on character. With an absence of restraint that surpasses mere bad taste, the dramatist is content to treat of second-rate people, second-rate ideas, second-rate passions; to write of what all can see, to record, to catalogue. He seems to care no longer that a vision of life should be the gift of his art, and is content to be life's copyist. On the one hand is Ibsen, the artist who modelled the life round him into an expression and interpretation of the deeper significance of all life; on the other is Stanley Houghton, who can do no more than record, more or less accurately. The one is the master who re-creates life; the other is no higher than his fellows; he sees but as they see, and can give them nothing.

Prophecy is almost always futile, and never more so than of the drama. But it is not possible to miss the signs of change, and it does not require much daring to suggest that in the long descent from the masters of realism, from Ibsen and Strindberg, we have reached the point where the modern drama is turning not only from sham realism but from the sham romance created by it.

I wish it were possible to write an essay on the Drama without using the terms Naturalism, Romanticism, Realism. These three are the greatest burdens of the critic; and for his sins he must even shoulder them. They are impossible of easy definition; but it will make my burden lighter if I may suggest now what sense the words have in this work. By Naturalism I understand the art which began with the efforts of Zola and his friends to create a new drama. I include under the heading all those plays which take their subject from the underworld, *and treat it in a manner calculated to bring out all the horror and grayness of the story they tell.* So that most of the work of the Dutch dramatist Heijermans is Naturalist, and that of Gorki, the Russian. And I speak of the underworld because it is in the underworld that the French creators of Naturalism almost exclusively worked. By Realism I understand a drama that treats of life as we to-day know it, and depends for its greatness on the success of the author in endowing it with qualities which lift it beyond to-day. I cannot attempt a definition of Romanticism. Where great scholars have failed gloriously, should I achieve inglorious success? Sufficient be it that so far as I know it, romantic art is two things: an attempt to hide from truth, or the power to dream nobly for love of dreaming. This is not a definition, it is an evasion.

For the rest, I have attempted to trace the first phase of the modern dramatic movement towards realism and the circumstances which gave it birth. This early movement, spreading over Europe from the playwrights of the Théâtre Libre, culminated in the work of the Swedish dramatist, Strindberg. At the same time, Ibsen perfected a wider dramatic realism, and his work changed the whole course of the drama of Northern Europe. After him come, in descending order, a succession of playwrights of the second phase of dramatic realism. I have classified them, not with regard to their nationality, but to their ideas.

The drama of to-day seems to me to fall into three divisions; the realist drama of the northern countries, for the most part following Ibsen afar off; the drama of the South, which on the whole is in the national tradition and bears little trace of any foreign influence save the French of Sardou and Dumas *fils*; and the drama of the revolt against realism, which sprang up in the North almost simultaneously with the triumph of the realist drama. The classification is necessarily incomplete, but it is the task of this study to prove it not entirely arbitrary.

Throughout I have judged dramatists by the one critical standard, that demands from tragedy the pity and fear of strength defeated, from comedy sanity and criticism of life. But there is great drama and there is also secondary drama. And, without betraying our faith, we may give thanks for the fragile distinction of Oscar Wilde, the intellectual power of Mr Shaw's finest work. I state a case: the case against mediocrity and imitative drama. I hold no brief from Parnassus.

It remains only to note that the many sections dealing with Russian drama were written before the recent change in Russia's political and social conditions. They have been allowed to stand. The abiding effect of the change upon her thinkers and writers is for future estimation.

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A FOREWORD

NIETZSCHE IN MODERN DRAMA

THOUGH Nietzsche despised the theatre as a medium fit only for appeal to the mob, his relation to modern drama is none the less worthy of consideration. We are not concerned with his few references to the stage, references always contemptuous, but with the working of his spirit during the dramatic age which had already reached its highest achievements when he wrote; and briefly with the relation of his philosophy to the characteristic features of that period. There are two strong reasons for thus singling out Nietzsche. The first lies in the peculiar aptness of his æsthetic thought to present-day criticism, and the second in the laxity which permits critics to refer vaguely to Nietzsche's influence on modern literature, and to rest content with that inadequate conscience gift. Whereas the influence of Ibsen has become a cant phrase of criticism, and one misunderstanding of Russian realism follows another, the place of Nietzsche in the dramatic thought of the century is passed over in scattered sentences.

It may be that there is something too uncompromising about him, which fits ill with this faithless generation. But difficult as it is to define his influence, no historian or critic has ever denied it: for good or evil, the Nietzschean philosophy, often half-comprehended, more often distorted and maimed, appears and reappears throughout the drama which succeeded that of Ibsen and Strindberg, his great contemporaries. In the very readiness to acknowledge his importance in the literary history of modern times, a danger lies. In too many books on Nineteenth Century literature we find him placed beside Ibsen, the Russian realists, and the writers of the Naturalist group in France, Zola, the de Goncourts and their fellows, as one of the four sources of the modern movement. This is very like the truth: but when so much is said, it would surely be just to point out that in the more diffuse influence of these others, part was of a kind for which Nietzsche reserved his bitterest scorn.

Since these varying forces have been linked together as joint sponsors of the literary change of the past half century it is as well to reflect that Nietzsche is like the others only in that his work generated unrest and dissatisfaction with accepted ideas. Apart from that, his teaching and its influence were opposed entirely to the ideals of the French naturalists on the one hand, and on the other to that of those Russian realists whose dramatic work came first to Europe by way of France. And therefore, although the disturbing nature of his philosophy, what Professor Saintsbury is pleased to call its topsy-turviness, added one more to the forces at work, it did so from a different angle and worked towards totally differing ends. Wherever his influence is strongest in a dramatist we find in the work of that dramatist elements which set it in direct opposition to the expressed ideals of its kind. The one drama of Maxim Gorki that approaches greatness does so not by reason of its crude Naturalism, but in so far as the influence of Nietzschean thought lifts it above the slavish realism of his other works. So in the work of Strindberg. In those very plays which are classed as naturalist, it is the attitude he shared with Nietzsche that gives them the power they possess, their insistence on the dramatic value of the moments of terrible conflict, that is to say, their insistence on the non-natural.

The dominant drama of the past fifty years has been one of realism. In Ibsen and Strindberg it was approaching its highest achievement during the years when Nietzsche's writings were execrated or ignored by people who disliked him for much the same reason as they disliked Ibsen. In the work of both these men there is the same intolerance of mediocrity: the same questioning of accepted creeds and faiths. For both, their refusal to conform to existing convention won a hatred which in the case of Nietszche continued throughout his life. Yet both of them were of their age, born of the unrest in religion and art. The scientific war which Huxley raised round himself was having its due effect on the unscientific world. Men questioned, or sank into apathy. Their questions were asked again by Ibsen and Nietzsche, and their apathy jeered at and lashed. Both did far more than reflect and symbolise the unrest of their time: they provoked further dissatisfaction, they sought the cause of the confusion; the one mainly in social injustice, the other in a perverse morality.

Where social wrongs press heavily, questions of morality are apt to go by the wall. Hence it comes about that the questions of Ibsen's drama were those which roused popular indignation or approval. Moreover, Ibsen was a plain man, though at times a little difficult of comprehension; Nietzsche, a mad-brained professor of classical philology, whose writings were as confused as his brain. The genius of Georges Brandes hailed him, the spirit of Strindberg responded to his. And though, for a thousand who prated of Ibsen, only one read Nietzsche, he was nevertheless a centre of disturbance even before Mr Shaw's misunderstanding of the superman dream. In his attack on the accepted values of morality, he reminded the world of a truth supremely important to the artist. There is one thing in life that a man loves more than life; that is power, power to reach beyond self to the finer than self. From the recognition of this truth come all the great tragedies of the world. If it were not for the knowledge of this, and the exultation in it, how were we able to bear the death that ends the play? This denial of the prevailing philosophy which saw the will-to-live as the motive power of the world, is Nietzsche's greatest value to the dramatist. Where the tragedies of the modern artist fail is in their forgetfulness of the truth on which he laid such stress. Take any one of them, and seek to explain to yourself your instinctive dissatisfaction with it. Take *Justice*, and ask why the death of the wretched Falder leaves you with no sense of triumph, no glory of inspiration. Is it not because he was so feeble that he desired merely to live, and that without thought, blindly, as an animal might? Take a finer play, take *Ghosts*: and ask why we feel it to be the deeper tragedy. It is not because death is better than madness, but because Oswald Alving, the higher nature, had grasped at artistic power, could have lived finely. One might carry these questions further, but it must be sufficient to note the æsthetic value of this side of Nietzsche's philosophy, and pass on to the part he played in the moral unsettlement reflected in the drama of the time.

Ibsen, who does not seem to have read his writings, and Strindberg, who certainly did, are his contemporaries, and it cannot be said that Nietzsche influenced them, as he has done later writers. They breathed the same atmosphere, and in differing ways, made the same protest. But Nietzsche was not content to stop where they did. He questioned the value of accepted morality itself, judging it by its usefulness to the furtherance of the race. 'None knoweth yet what is good and evil.' The type of morality which is set before the race as its ideal, determines the dominant type of man. In a morality which exalted self-sacrifice and taught that a man must live for another world he saw only a menace to the highest interests of man. Add to this pseudo-morality, the philosophy dominant at the time, which insisted on adaptation to an artificial environment as a means to the happiness and survival of the fittest, and the chances in favour of the survival of the degenerate are strong. Hence Nietzsche's savage attack on the meaning attached to the terms good and evil, and those demands for a revaluation of religious ideals which brought him mockery and hatred. No dramatist presented the logical outcome of his destruction of established faith, yet he disturbed and stimulated. It was easy for the second-rate dramatist to take the model which Ibsen's constructive genius gave him, and fill it in with his second-rate ideas. It was impossible to grasp one side only of Nietzsche's teaching, and not to be stirred to doubt and to independent thought, a thing beyond many who followed Ibsen. Nietzsche refuses to be the leader of a herd; protesting that where the struggle between nature and nature is sharpest there is born the highest ideal. Where we find his influence in later dramatists we find also something of independence of thought, something of greatness.

We find, moreover, a quality as great as these; that triumphant faith in the human spirit needed more than any other quality at a time when gloom was creeping over the drama. The work of Zola and his circle, of Tolstoi, and of the belated followers of naturalism, among them Heijermans, is too often deliberately depressing. In misery, evil and crime, the curse of heredity, the horror of the slum, the artist sought 'truth.' Pessimism became something of a disease. Men saw the foundations of their faith tottering before scientific developments. Either they pronounced the world a mistake, or they sought refuge in a doctrine of resignation: Schopenhauer's philosophic belief found a strange popularity. The primitive force of the world, the spring of existence, is the will-to-live, to live at all costs. The end is war and a blind chain of destruction. Man's will has become self-conscious and it is for him to turn it against itself, to kill the will-to-live, or else to cease rebellion, and find happiness in the lethargic acceptance of circumstance. The wave of pessimism has passed and left a curious indifference to anything beyond the present, an unobtrusive scepticism which meets us everywhere. Were Bradlaugh to preach to-day he would find a passing fame, followed by indifference. Few would oppose him violently, few give him enthusiasm and ardent support. Pessimists by profession are everywhere, but they are mild and happy beings; they perceive a war of life, call it hideous, and pause to speculate on the impossibilty of reconciling their pessimistic belief with the will-to-live. The cheerful mediocrity and indifference which so angered Nietzsche are dominant to-day, and probably they form an even more stultifying atmosphere for art than a reasoned pessimism. Both alike are sign and cause of weakness, and both appear throughout the modern drama. In the misery of Heijerman's plays, in the crime and evil that formed so much of the dramatic work of Gorki and of the French naturalists, in the hundred and one meaningless visions of misery with which the 'serious' stage to-day is burdened, as with the stupidity of Mr Masefield's *Nan*, we are brought face to face with a pessimism doubly false, in its lack of philosophic justification and in that none believe in it, though many exploit it. Nietzsche hated this lying faith, and its aimless indifference to the future. He offered in its place a new goal on earth, the creation of a higher race: not happiness in heaven, nor ease here, but constant effort towards a finer humanity. With this in his heart, a man might laugh and be glad of pain and strife, to try his strength and bequeath to his children a finer heritage of courage and resolution. 'What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal' (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*). Thus there need be no despair, but ceaseless toil and courage. This same note is in Ibsen's drama: that a man must look to the future, hating compromise, cowardly ease and slavish acceptance of wrong and misery. It is in Shaw, not only in *Man and Superman*, but in his war on convention and his bitterness of indignation at the cowardice and hypocrisy behind which we shelter. It appears in the only play of Gorki that may be called great, where amid the misery of the night-shelter, the preaching of Satine creates a vision of the future in the outcasts of the streets.

Throughout the whole work of Tchekhov, Gorki's greater countryman, its cry of revolt lifts it above the lifeless realism of the moment. His drama does not wail, nor torture us with aimless suffering. It is a drama for the future, it has learned to despise an effortless pessimism. And since it is by ceaseless effort that a man must work for the new age, it must be also in pain, for easy happiness is acquiescence in the state of the present.

Where the adaptation to artificial environment, social or moral, is most complete, there is found mediocrity, mob-rule. Pain and strife are the two great forces whereby a man learns courage and restraint. This is the triumph of Brand in death, of Dr Stockmann in defeat. It is this exaltation through pain which makes bearable the despair of the older Russia in Tchekhov's drama: his men and women are beaten, but they rebel. They do not wring their hands and babble of heredity and environment, as do the modern degenerates of our 'serious' drama. Failure to adapt to natural environment is one sign of degeneracy. Facility in adapting to a degrading artificial environment is another. Hence Nietzsche's scorn of those seeking only ease, and Strindberg's recognition of the value for tragedy of life's terrible moments. 'The true, the great naturalism,' he wrote, 'seeks out those points in life where the greatest conflicts occur. It loves to see what is not to be seen every day. It rejoices in the battle of elements, powers, whether they be called love or hatred, noble or revolting instincts. It cares not whether they be beautiful or ugly so that they be only great.' This exaltation of pain has nothing to say to that drama which exploits misery and poverty, or revels in the exhibition of degeneracy and disease. Much of the drama of Brieux, and the greater part of the naturalist work falls under this head. The desire to dwell on misery and evil, the effort to rouse a fury of inspiration by depicting scenes of violence is itself a sign of dramatic weakness.

After the attack on convention, his savage self-assertion is the quality of Nietzsche's doctrine which has taken strongest hold on modern drama. He hated the weakness which perpetuated weakness and degeneracy. A man must climb alone if he is to climb at all, and he must learn to look for hatred and distrust from the mob he outstrips. We find the fruits of this faith throughout modern realist drama. Ibsen learned the lesson early: the drama of Shaw reiterates it in a different way. For surrender to the morality and the conventions of the herd, Shaw reserves his bitterest scorn, and his most merciless wit. The curious dramatic posturing of Frank Wedekind, the German, is a perverted form of the same demand for self-assertion. His work, harsh and crude as it is, is the expression throughout of a dominant personality, insistent on the supreme necessity for individual effort. It offers a curious and rather painful study in the effect which Nietzsche can produce on the mind of a hardened materialist.

The drama of Strindberg is probably the most worthy of study in this connection. He is a one-sided Nietzsche, in savage revolt against the conditions of life. Unlike Nietzsche, he cannot laugh; he can only protest or seek oblivion in an allegorical dream. The men and women of his characteristic work are every one at war, against each other, or against a passion stronger than themselves. His hatred of the masculine woman is as bitter as that of Nietzsche, and plays a far greater part in his work. His distrust of Ibsen's revolting womanhood irritated him into the creation of an opposite type, a woman who demands liberty as her right, regardless that she must get it through the enslavement and toil of a man. The characters of his best work are never of the herd: for good or evil they are outside it, above it. We may dislike his plays, but we cannot deny their power. Their blackness is abysmal; the figures moving over his stage appear distorted and greater than men by reason of their savage rebellion against the forces that crush them. There is no dramatist whose assertion of personality is so uncompromising and so powerful. Could he but have laughed, have shaken off the horror of his visions, he might have been the greatest of modern dramatists. He stands like a mutilated statue, beaten and defaced by the same fierce flame that burned in Nietzsche, the clearest justification of the claim that the spirit of Nietzsche is akin to the forces that have moved in modern drama.

It is not strange that the kernel of Nietzsche's philosophy, his ideal of the superman, has found little dramatic expression. With the exception of Mr Shaw's magnificent failure the dream of the superman lives on only in a vague dissatisfaction, and in tirades against the morality and conventions of the mob. But Europe resented and was stirred by his attack and his ideal, and the proof of it is found in strange places. Not in *Man and Superman* alone, but in the *Night Shelter*, and in every play which looks to the development of a higher race, even in M. Brieux' patient insistence on the beauty and glory of a system of eugenics. It is a pity that those who follow afar off his vision of the future have not Nietzsche's insight into the value of modern progress. When we consider the selfishness and charlantry of the woman's outcry as it appears in Sudermann's *Heimat*, the social platitudes of M. Brieux' *Les Bienfaiteurs*, and of how many more of his dramatic tracts and of the modern plays which stand for advance, we grow weary of these mummers and pray for the daylight to expose the tinsel and paint.

So much for Nietzsche's part in the spirit of unrest and rebellion which stirred European drama while he lived, and will stir it again to finer things.

It is impossible not to be struck by the uncanny aptness of his artistic discourse to the tendencies of modern drama. This is not the place for a dissertation on Nietzsche's æsthetic faith : it must suffice to recall that for him, art was the glorifier of life, dramatic art as every other; bringing order out of disorder, interpreting and intensifying man's desire to master life. The artist, by virtue of his creative need, seeks in the universe a human significance. He stamps on it his conception of truth and interprets it for the rest of men, so that where before was confusion and dread of the unknown is order and the joy of having subdued life to the spirit of man. The artist's love of the beautiful is an expression of his creative will.

'The love of adjusting and reforming—a primeval love! We can only take cognisance of a world which we ourselves have made' (*Will to Power*). The facts of life are plain to all men: the work of the artist is to form a vision of life in which all these naked facts and truths can be given a meaning for humanity. He interprets, simplifies, and thereby inspires.

The artist may turn his powers not towards the glorification of life, but towards its depreciation. Then he ceases to inspire and his work enfeebles the will. Or, oppressed by a consciousness of the misery and ugliness of life, he falsifies it for men, weakening the will even more surely. Expressed in another form, this distinction between good and bad artists becomes a question whether the artist has given of a superabundant vitality to re-create life, or whether he has merely taken the facts of life to manufacture his work. The first is a sign of strength, the latter of weakness. The first gave us the finest drama of Ibsen, the latter is giving us the plays of Mr Arnold Bennett.

It is somewhat less insolent to leave this suggestion of Nietzsche's artistic philosophy thus evidently crude and halting, than to attempt a further inadequate exposition. Let us look now at the modern theatre in the light of his conception. Regard the patient record of little events and little emotions which makes up so much of the drama achieved by modern 'intellectuals,' the drama of M. Brieux, of Hermann Sudermann, of Mr Granville Barker, and Mr Harold Brighouse—'Notebook psychology on a large or small scale? Such a man is constantly spying on reality, and every evening he bears home a handful of fresh curios. . . . But look at the result!—a mass of daubs, at best a piece of mosaic, in any case something heaped together, restless and garish. . . . From an artistic standpoint nature is no model . . . this lying in the dust before trivial facts is unworthy a thorough artist. To see *what is*—is the function of another order of intellect, the anti-artistic, the matter of fact' (*Twilight of the Idols*). There is no stronger condemnation of the false realist who cannot fulfil the first duty of an artist—which is re-creation. A record of fact can produce only chaos, and the artist who fails to see that the world is his work of art to be interpreted and simplified, is no other than the ordinary man, a field-labourer among labourers. Further, this condemnation of the false realism which devotes itself to copying 'life' condemns also any presentment of unredeemed misery and ugliness. 'Ugliness is the contradiction of art: wherever decline, impoverishment of life, impotence, decomposition, dissolution are felt, however remotely, the æsthetic man reacts with his No. *Ugliness depresses'* (*Will to Power*). A drama which is merely an unpleasant story, which offers us only the study of a vicious man or woman, or revels in the pathological and the degenerate is a drama which weakens. Its appeal is only to the already enfeebled. This is not a demand that art should instruct. Far from it. But it is a demand that art should present life as worth living, should glorify it for us, give us inspiration, strength and faith in the power of the human spirit. For this reason the cry of art for art's sake is an unmeaning phrase. The artist must needs lay stress on some side of life, and in so doing he brings either strength or weakness to the spectator.

Equally does Nietzsche condemn false romance, the other side of the weakness which produces slavish realism and barren ugliness. The easy sensation of Mæterlinck's *Mary Magdalene*, the extravagance of D'Annunzio, are alike marks of degeneracy. A feverish desire to be excited, to watch unrestrained passion and violence are due not to strength, but to a consciousness of exhaustion. 'The preference for exciting materials (Erotica or Socialistica, or Pathologica): all these things are the signs of the style of public opinion that is being catered for to-day—that is to say, for overworked, absent-minded, or enfeebled people' (*Will to Power*). Behind the poor realism and the false romance is the same element of weakness, a lack of purpose, direction and restraint, the inability to form a standard of values. When M. Brieux demands our attention for social evil, he fails to create great drama from it, through the insignificance of his men and women. They are too small for a big conception. The modern stage is full of these little people, born of technical incompetence and lack of dramatic power. Their authors have learned to copy, but not to create; to raise a storm by flinging their puppets about the stage, but not to inspire. The drama of to-day is a drama of anarchy; dramatists have forgotten how to imagine finely. They offer us studies of little lives, with nothing of inspiration in them, and they demand praise for fidelity or sincerity; meaning thereby failure to interpret the life they draw, or to create other than a bad copy of what all can see and need no such imitation to comprehend. The artist finds life a tangle of events and emotions. It is his task to stamp upon it a vision of order and simplicity, to give meaning to that which is otherwise meaningless, to draw beauty and inspiration from what is else the blind strife of man against the forces of nature, the disordered concept of life as it appears to the unimaginative mind. It is Nietzsche's great æsthetic service that he hated this anarchy of the non-artistic, teaching that artists 'should not see things as they are—they should see them fuller, simpler, stronger.' His demand for the restraint which springs from the consciousness of strength, his hatred of the imitative work which is a contradiction of art are the greater and finer in these days when one half of the world stays away from the 'advanced' theatres, wherein the other half would like to show them—'How ordinary people eat, drink, love, move about the world.' We hear too much of the demand for a higher drama; societies are formed for its protection. And ever it is forgotten that a drama which must be protected and spoon-fed is but a weakling; that what is needed is not more plays but greater dramatists; and that if nine-tenths of the 'higher' drama of the past half-century were swept away, nothing would be lost to posterity save what posterity will forget to notice.

It would be absurd to affirm that Nietzsche has been the widest influence in modern drama. Neither do I affirm it, though the fact that I have given this foreword to the question of his influence would seem to suggest it. I repeat that the main reason for so doing is this: that critics and historians alike have written of him as one of the great forces in modern literature, and for the most part have been content with the assertion. The influence of Ibsen and of the French school of drama which gathered round M. André Antoine at the Théâtre Libre has been valued and estimated in a hundred books and countless reviews: it is estimated here. And it is to Ibsen that we look for the model which later writers of the dominant drama of realism have followed. From the nature of Nietzsche's writings it is obviously impossible to find his influence anywhere save in the spirit of the drama.

CHAPTER I

BEFORE IBSEN

THE drama of the past fifty years has been a drama of realism. Other tendencies there have been, other ideals. The drama of southern Europe has little in common with the dominant drama of the north: that dominant drama itself has had enemies of its own household. But our dictum, critical truism though it be, holds good of the significant drama of modern Europe. The words dominant, significant, applied to the drama of which Ibsen and Strindberg are the points of highest achievement, require explanation. The history of the drama, as of other literary forms, is one of impulse and reaction, revolt and conservation. And a vital drama must be one which responds to the new needs and ideals of the age, and in responding, re-creates them, setting itself above their evanescence and decay. Only such a drama is significant, and only such is at the same time of to-day and of to-morrow.

For an attempt at the realisation of this dramatic ideal during the years of change in the later half of the last century, it is to northern Europe that we must look. It is the dramatists of France, England, Scandinavia, Germany, and Russia whose work sets itself to express and stride ahead of its time. How far each succeeded and how far failed is for later thought. Sufficient now that in them modern realism is most clearly stated, because in them we find the life and ideals of their age, with its doubt and its faith, its searching and its failure. Should this be all we find, then they have failed of the highest vision. Not to reflect only, but to inspire and re-create is their work: ours to demand at the door of the future whether this present of their making has been worthy its high argument. That they made the attempt is their claim to be held makers of the dominant drama, the drama which marks the period.

This realist art sprang from the needs and from the condition of the age. Its necessity was the eternal necessity for a new ideal to replace one worn-out and barren. It was in the first instance a protest against the most rigid of dramatic tyrannies, that exercised over the most feeble of slaves. The 'well-made' play of Scribe, and later of Sardou, with the pseudo-psychology of Dumas *fils,* held the European stage in the early half of the nineteenth century. In England and Germany its rule approached an absolute monarchy. In both countries the Gallic spirit was transmuted into an incredible puerility, sometimes touching that sorriest depth of all, a Teutonic effort after the delicately immoral. Attracted by the mechanistic neatness of their models, the English and German playwrights lacked the skill to equal it. Sardou, a heavy, wearisome Sardou, appears most often. The moral and social discussion which Dumas *fils* added to Scribe's constructive neatness was for the most part beyond them. But the intricate inanities of *Les Pattes de Mouche* face us everywhere in the drama of both countries. The servants or friends of the family discuss the chief puppets while the audience listen at the keyhole. In *Les Pattes de Mouche* Prosper forces the story of his life upon Vanhove—'Qu'est-ce que vous dites de ça?' he demands. 'Rien!' Exactly. Wives and maids retreat into bedrooms for the sole purpose of being discovered there. The aside is rampant. Incident upon incident is manufactured to keep up a stupid intrigue amid the babble of the characters. It is neither life nor an illusion of life, neither thought nor its appearance. The strings are pulled, the figures move. In the work of the younger Dumas there is the same want of a vital principle. The machinery is too well-oiled to creak, but it whirs. Here is an appearance of psychological discussion added to the old tricks of aside and soliloquy. The framework is the same. In *La Femme de Claude* there are the principal characters with lesser ones to discuss them, to tell them their life-history, to jerk the action towards the little tragedy at the end when one puppet shoots the other. There is some fine writing in this play, on the theme of war and progress, to form a background for the grand study of a woman who kills or dishonours between two smiles, 'une colère de Dieu.' We must needs accept the statement on the word of her friends and enemies: she, like them, moves on wires, and like them has no character save the one in which she is dressed.

Such was the drama which formed a model for the youthful playwright in the mid-nineteenth century. Order characterised it. Dumas *fils* had a passion for tidiness. No puppet was ever on the stage when he was not wanted: the discussion, the morality, the social ethics, were never allowed to border on a philosophy of life. Life requires more than the mere technical skill of a Scribe, more than the indignations of a Dumas *fils* to subdue it to dramatic form. They overcame the difficulty by excluding life from their plays.

ENGLAND

Let us see how it fared with their imitators. It is ill work to gibbet the pitiful ghosts of Sir Arthur Pinero's past. A scientific impersonality must save us. In 1880, one year before *Ghosts* increased his countrymen's hatred of Ibsen, appeared a little play, *The Money Spinner.* It opens with the entrance of Jules Flaubert, who wanders round his victim's dining-room, soliloquising in a villainous manner, and disappears. From the asides muttered over his letters we learn that Harold Boycott has 'borrowed' his firm's money: when he leaves the room the conversation continues crab-wise:—

> FLAUBERT, returned (aside): To shave! That means a razor. I hate razors. Three times in my life I have been frustrated by a razor. It is such a sudden temptation.
>
> MILLICENT (aside): What sort of a man is Harold's new friend, I wonder?
>
> FLAUBERT (aside): Something tells me I am being looked at. How curious women are.

When Millicent realises Harold's financial confusion she has a magnificent idea. Before her marriage she was a decoy at her father's gambling-house in Paris, and by a happy chance here are her father and Dolly, her sister, come to visit her in Rouen. With them is a rich Scotch lord, once in love with Millicent, now with Dolly. She will remember her sleight of hand and cheat her old lover out of ten thousand francs. She plays—'Why, how your hand trembles!' 'It is so warm here.' Then she is found out, weeps, confesses. But happiness does not depend on virtue when one is so pretty as Millicent. There is a touching scene between the sisters. Dolly, jealous, has been listening at the door, but satisfied that there is honour among thieves rushes to embrace her worthy relative. Harold takes ten thousand francs from the man who had just publicly called his wife a cheat, and all is well. In construction the play is crude beyond belief, in its use of the aside, its banality of conception, and an utter absence of probability in the progress of the action. The morality it assumes is incredibly low. Humour is supplied by the drunken stupidity of the scoundrelly old father. Of the characterisation it is impossible to speak. There is none; unless we suppose the author to be supporting the view that women have no morals, but habits only. Apart from this interpretation, which we offer with some hesitation, the characters are so meaningless as to be monsters of stupidity. Of the spiritual worth of the play there is nothing to be said. It is with the technique and the drawing of character, below consideration.

The state of the English stage at the time is sufficiently realised when we remember that with Mr H. A. Jones, Mr Pinero was among the first of the younger playwrights. Turning to Mr Jones, we find a difference of spirit. In construction his early plays are equally crude. *A Bed of Roses*, written two years after the *Money Spinner*, relies on the same tricks. The valet babbles of the family and of a casual advertisement in the Agony Column. This he has recognised by the initials to concern Charles Vellacott, erring son, disowned three years before. Dora, the daughter, tells her friend, Amy, the rest of the story. It seems needless, since Amy has always lived with them and was in love with Charles. Further, the resident doctor, George Dalyson, has an occasional pain in his arm, an old wound dating from his rescue of a man in the African war. Ha! Charles! The suspense ends when Charles rushes to the arms of a repentant parent and tells of an army surgeon who saved his life. George has been dismissed for making love to Dora; he has resigned her because he cannot tear her from an irascible father, but Charles' arrival saves them both. In matters technical Mr Jones is no apter pupil of his French masters than Mr Pinero. But he is content to write of people he knows. Old

Velacott, tyrannising over his family, insulting his doctor; Dora, the sweet little fool of ancient comedy; Amy, her more robust-minded friend, walk and talk, though sometimes in jerks. There is a gentle humour, and patches of unforced dialogue. That much is all there is to be said in praise. In truth both playwrights are on a level incredibly low. It is the level of the English drama of the time, which stood as low as any in Europe. In construction it was so bad as to seem a feeble joke; it concerned itself solely with people who had neither intellectual nor spiritual worth. It was as far behind its age then as it is now. It can hardly be labelled drama, badly-made, dull, undramatic as it was, with little of observation, save in the work of Mr Jones, and with nothing to lift it above the level of the most commonplace of bad novels.

GERMANY

The English stage had probably sunk lower than that in the other countries of northern Europe. In Germany, Hebbel, Freytag, Anzengruber were writing when Knowles, Lytton, Taylor, and Robertson in England had dragged the drama into such inanity that the early work of Mr H. A. Jones is good by comparison. In the years after 1830 a group of German playwrights gathered round Laube and Gutzkow struggled after Victor Hugo: their efforts ended in exaggeration of character, together with a dependence on intrigue after the fashion of Scribe. After them came Hebbel, thinker and artist, whose studies of character will not yet pass from their high place in the German drama, and Anzengruber, whose work is of no importance save in his peasant dramas. Here he writes of a folk he knew, and achieves both force and a shadowed beauty. But Hebbel's depths of psychology are apt to be turgid, and tainted with the *raisonneur* spirit, and Anzengruber's drama is specialised. In spite of their existence the German stage stood little higher than the English. Their work was not popular; the German audience preferred the middle-class comedy which did not trouble it with high ethical argument, but assumed a morality of the middle-classes neither inspiring nor productive. As the century passed into the seventies, the influence of Sardou and Dumas *fils* dominated. The playwrights who held the stage were the writers of bourgeois comedy, Moser and Blumenthal, and slavish copyists of France after the manner of Lindau. Perhaps somewhat more promise showed in Germany than in England. Hebbel and Anzengruber existed, if their age did not recognise them: for some years after 1874 the Meiningers kept alive in Germany an ideal of the theatre which is coming to its own now in the work of Max Reinhardt and in various Art Theatres: in 1876 the first Bayreuth performance suggested a rhythmical unity still to be realised on the stage. But on the other hand, the German Gallophile has a heaviness the English playwright lacks, and in his attempts at immorality flounders even more painfully.

Of the drama of northern Europe little more can be said. There was no goodness in it. The lack of master dramatists, and the spiritual depression which lay on it during the early and middle years of the century, gave France her supremacy. She could offer a model of wonderful ingenuity and neatness, and she forced it on the enfeebled drama of the rest of Europe. In the far north, in Norway, the master dramatist was already writing, but even in 1877, in the *Pillars of Society*, Ibsen was half beneath the spell of a French technique. There is one exception to be made before the drama of northern Europe is left in its obscurity. Russian drama has a characteristic which it shared with none at the time, a recognition of the interest and importance of life, and a philosophy of life. It must be treated with respect, and we remove it from the company of the Blumenthals, Lindaus, Pineros, and the rest.

SPAIN AND ITALY

So much for the drama of the North. The drama of the South, though decadent, is something more inspiriting. Dying national traditions struggled against external faction; the romantic fireworks of 1830 and the later glitter of Dumas and Sardou passed in turn across a stage round which was still the glamour of the past. In the two countries to which we look, the past stood for differing ideals: they share only the one characteristic, an acceptance of life itself which is as far removed from the Russian probing into its value, as from the Teutonic absorption in its conditions. So far as their external history goes, both dramas passed through somewhat the same ordeal. In Spain, with the banishment of most literary men during Ferdinand's reign, came the severest shock to the tradition of Calderon, already reduced to a cut-and-dry formula. Less than twenty years later the liberal success of 1832 provided the outlet for a feverish energy of literary life. Byron, Chateaubriand, and Sir Walter Scott inspired it; the literary clubs of Madrid excited it, and the Duque de Rivas' *Don Alvaro* swept it on to the stage. The vivid effect-seeking of the latter-day romantic style accorded with elements in the Spanish genius, but it brought the drama nothing. There was, in the first place, an attempt by Zorilla and the Court dramatists to revive the tradition of Calderon. It failed utterly. Then came a following of the French society drama. But in Spain there is nothing like the long period of imitated Sardou and Dumas *fils* through which the drama of northern Europe passed. The didactic preoccupation of the latter is foreign to her spirit; her nearest approach to him is in the work of Bretón de los Herreros, whose comedies join discursive ethics to a well-bred society and an easy wit. Her tradition of realism in the picaresque novel leavened even her imitation of Sardou ; moreover, he could teach Spanish dramatists nothing in imaginative intrigue, and they were little inclined to learn a mechanical neatness.

Indeed, the Spanish drama of the time suffered more from inanition than from helpless submission to the French dominion. Cross currents of literary influence, and the instability of society, worked with the depression following Calderon's systematisation of Lope de Vega to make the Spanish stage a battle-ground for any influence. French romanticism, French *drame sociale,* remembered traditions, have all their place; and Spanish drama shared in the general feebleness of European drama without sharing in its monotony.

The Italian drama followed the lines of the Spanish with some points of difference. Her dramatic tradition was not the same. In Spain it was the tradition of a robust romanticism, deifying personal honour, holding fast a vision of life's thousand aspects seen through a glory of imaginative fantasy. In Italy her highest ideal is an ideal which tolerates the opiates of the romantic as little as the copyist's vision of reality. The tradition of her drama is a classic tradition; a character of nobility and of great spiritual worth developing in conflict with an action, nervous, restrained, momentous. It is, moreover, an art of dramatic moments. The concentration of the dramatic energy sweeps the action to them : the intrinsic beauty of the language heightens their force. A dangerous heritage if the heir should lack the conscious restraint of strength. In the hands of such an one, the 'moments' are not born of the conflict at the point of its supreme intensity. They become theatrical sensations, and the music of the language a cloak round a lay figure. The true Reality, which is the artist's interpretation of life, is lost beneath that false ideal of reality in *L'Assommoir* or *La Faustin*. Restraint departs when the dramatist turns to sensation for its own sake. It becomes unnecessary, since there is nothing worth restraining. Hence the method of the latest heir, of D'Annunzio, is fatal to the spirit of his art, though he wrap the body in cloth of Paradise.

To this latest betrayal the Italian drama was passing while the drama of northern Europe modelled its little wooden dolls. As in Spain, its course during this time was conditioned by social confusion. There was no united national ideal; religion was dying in sterile formalism; the people were waking to passionate revolt against their misery. The high hopes, the *Risorgimento* of the Garibaldian liberation, of Mazzini's gospel of freedom, were dead. Every fresh hope brought an illusion of literary revival, and as the hope died, so died the illusion, until one of Italy's greatest modern critics could write—'In all that makes literature my country has grown feeble and weary, and grows more so with every year.' Cossa lived until 1881, and after his historical plays and Cavallotti's mangled Grecian themes came the imitation of French models. The Italians are intolerant of the instruction play. They forgave Cossa his little dramatic worth for his sonority of words. In the same spirit, their following of France took the form of 'clotted nonsense' after the style of a debased Hugo; or elaborated the intrigue interest of Sardou and Dumas, ignoring for the most part the latter's philosophical trifling. This they did, in common with Spain, not solely from incapacity, as did the dramatists of the north, but from disdain.

But in the drama of both north and south at the time there was no life, and in their weariness of spirit they turned to whatever master was bold enough to have a serviceable formula. In England and Germany the imitation of the French drama was in effect a feeble endeavour to write of English life in the style of the French society drama: on the southern stage, the Gallic spirit blended with the decay of national traditions in literature and in life, to form a dramatic art unworthy of the past and sterile for the future. In such humiliating paths the European drama moved during the first part of the later nineteenth century. So arose the need of revolt, and as ever with the need, came the movement.

It becomes important now to understand those conditions of the age which moulded the form of that movement. It was an age seeking after strange gods. Science became a deity to one half the world, a wanton destroyer to the other. By the mouths of those who ignorantly worshipped, a philosophy of materialism triumphed, in a form more blatant than ever before, the way made easy for it by the genius of Huxley in the polemics which occupied him after 1880. In its train came those who feared or hated it; blind graspers at mysticism, or pessimists who said the gods were dead, and despaired, or accepted the new rôle with a self-conscious knowledge of its impressiveness. Whatever the value and need of the new doctrine, its first effect on art was to debase it. It depreciated life itself, displaying it as primarily a struggle for existence; insisted on adaptive submission to artificial environment, and preached an optimism which was as unjustifiable as it was blatant and unsatisfying. The art of the drama is the first to be degraded by a depreciation of life. Accordingly we find the acting drama of the period stupid commonplace, or clamorous melodrama.

But before the triumph of science, a change had already begun. It manifested itself in crude individualism of the Manchester school, and more subtly in what may be called a socialisation of the religious belief in the equality of human souls. With the theological validity of the belief we are not concerned: its dramatic validity concerns us mightily. It is responsible for half the misvaluation of dramatic values that has flooded our theatres with third-rate plays of third-rate people. Dramatically speaking, souls are not equal. Great plays cannot be written of little souls. 'Sublimity,' said Longinus, the master, 'is the echo of a great soul. . . . For it is not possible that men with mean and servile ideas and aims prevailing throughout their lives should produce anything worthy of immortality.' Mr Galsworthy's *Justice* is not a great tragedy, for Falder is a feeble soul. Sudermann's *Heimat* is commonplace because Magda is a poseur. D'Annunzio's *Sogno d'un tramonto d'Autumno* is glorious melodrama because Pantea is just the usual type of beautiful harlot. The life and death of little folk do not make a drama which inspires by the realisation of a fuller life. They may make excellent comedy of the Barrie order, or provide pegs for M. Brieux. They do not fulfil the essential of great drama, that it should perfect life, making human existence an inspiration, and not a wail or a bad joke. The dramatist works in lives and souls. If the life he present be only a picture stolen from the world around him, with nothing of his own power to interpret, it follows that it is feeble, a copy of less value than the original. His drama must be instinct with the spirit of life or become a little less than the cinematograph. If the life in which he works be ugly, that is to say, if it revel in the degenerate, if it assume life to be valueless, if it be a copy of degraded conditions, then again it is a drama of weakness and must perish of inanition. If his people move in a society which has lost belief in the beauty or worth of life, and do not struggle against such degradation, they cannot produce anything but a lower order of drama. A mechanistic conception of life destroys the highest dramatic action; the doctrine of equality degrades dramatic characterisation. For individualism, when it steps down from its place as a philosophic conception, and becomes a social faith, is measured in terms of material power. It was before Huxley had done his work as populariser of Darwin that Arnold could say: 'The idea of perfection as an *inward* condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilisation in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us.'

The scientific philosophy and the social philosophy of the day degraded life. They did worse. They destroyed faith. Human aspiration lost its value when the doctrine of the survival of the fittest was allied to a belief that evil tends to disappear, and that adaption to an artificial environment is the duty of a race. Under such conditions of life, the drama might develop on two lines. It might resolve to take life as it appeared to be, to accept its law of cause and effect as the limit of action, and to deal in 'the facts of life' without any attempt to correlate or to give them higher significance. This it might do in a spirit of despair—pessimistic drama; in a spirit of impersonal interest—the realist drama of which *The Silver Box* is the type; in reforming mood —after the fashion of Mr Shaw and M. Brieux; or with intent to exploit 'real life' for dramatic purposes. Under this head fall Sudermann and Mr Granville

Barker, and how many more. The second line of dramatic development would turn aside from a hard acceptance of these 'facts of life,' and seek to hide them, without attempting to deny their validity as 'truth.' Dramatists of the latter order would deal in romance, or find fictitious resignation in a mystical puppet-show.

Both these lines were followed. By far the greater number of dramatists followed the first, and even those who rebelled against it were compelled to take count of its view of life. Hence the romance becomes a matter of painted masks, or the dreams of a sick man; and the mysticism deals in the shadows of shadows. To know, to deal in facts—this was the dominant note of the dramatic change. Of necessity it was most loud in the north, where the scientific and social philosophies pressed deeper into the life of the people. Hence it is towards the south that we look for the revolt of the romantic; and in the rebels of the north that the pseudo-mystical element predominates. Modern 'mysticism' requires the less energy; any sense of the fullness of life would inconvenience it.

The determination to get at the facts, to show up life for the failure it was, came first in the dramatic revolt against the society drama. It was the stronger element, and more important than its fellow, though both were born of the same need and the same conditions. The desire to know, as an artistic impulse, is productive: the desire to evade is not. Hence the strength of the dramatic impulse given by Zola, the de Goncourts and their group: and the unproductive nature of such work as Mæterlinck's, and as D'Annunzio's. Mæterlinck's work has given little to drama: the plays of D'Annunzio's followers exaggerate his love of violent passions and miss his superlative beauty of language. The Belgian has inspired nothing: the Italian has at least had the power to inspire melodrama.

This dominant drama of realism has had two more or less distinct phases. The first was realised in the group of Parisian playwrights who joined M. André Antoine in 1887. An insistence on the lower and more terrible sides of life characterised their artistic ideal; and of all those who followed it, Strindberg is the greatest. The second phase came later when Ibsen gave to realist drama a meaning so wide, and a technique so nearly perfect that he revolutionised its conception. Had there been any to equal or excel him, it might be said that he revolutionised its product. At least, he profoundly altered it.

THE FIRST PHASE OF REALISM IN THE DRAMA.

The Naturalists

As in every movement, so in this, there were charlatans, men who saw the commercial value of plays dealing with crime and misery, and exploited life in the name of dramatic art. But there is no denying that the work of the pioneers was work given as the highest service they could offer to the theatre. In genuine scorn of the society drama they tried to force a recognition of its futility. It seems a general failing that a revolt against the atmosphere of the salon, combined with a desire to know life, leads straight to the gutter or the doss-house. So it happened with many of these rebels of the first phase. The literary faith of Zola and his group was to be applied to drama. The theatre must be dragged into line with the life of the day. As in their fiction they approached the ideal of a scientific record of facts, thoughts and emotions, so in the drama they would present life, the life of the streets, of the middle-class, of the underworld, without forcing it within the limits of a plot, or attempting pseudo-psychological analysis. This is the movement labelled Naturalism, because it dealt with presumably natural things in a way more or less natural. We need not labour the value of such an effort at such a time. Nothing could have dealt a more effective blow at the output of machine-made plays, than the ruthless contrast between their unreality and the bareness of the facts. Drama, with all literature, received a creative impulse which moved in every country of Europe, and the effect of which still remains. There was a vital principle in the movement. It dealt with a present reality, and so could inspire to artistic creation as a drama of puppets could not. That it dealt with life in a disordered and disunifying way was its weakness. This brought it at the last to incoherence and defeat; but not before its work was done, and the theatre, lagging behind the age, had been brought into touch with its aspirations and its ideals.

Becque

Zola himself could not do for drama what he had done for literature. *Thérèse Raquin* failed on the stage. It was left for Henri Becque to embody the new theories in two plays. *Les Corbeaux* was written as early as 1882. It is the story of a manufacturer's widow, surrounded after her husband's death by legal men who defraud her of her fortune. That is all; no witty dialogue, no intricate plot, no love-making. The play is a series of *genre* pictures, opening with a sketch of the family life of a provincial merchant, neither made a witty impossibility, nor turned to ridicule. The scenes between Mme Vigneron, kindly, incompetent wife of the merchant, and Mme de Saint-Genis, calculating, *bonne citoyenne,* are natural conversations without sparkle or psychological discussion or paradox. The aside and the monologue have almost disappeared, but there are occasional lapses into the stage trickery of Dumas *fils*: our first knowledge of the treachery against the widow hangs on M. Teissier's monologue. It is usual to suppose that Becque disdained all constructive art. That is a mistake. There is both dramatic incident and a subtle development of character. Thus, in the first act, the sense of quiet well-being in Vigneron's home is destroyed in a moment by the news of his death. Thereafter the darkness draws down. The loss of their money puts an end to plans for the marriage of one daughter; and broken under the dishonour she sees approaching, she goes mad. Another daughter finds that her dreams of artistic success were silly illusion; and Marie, the third daughter, must save them all by marrying the old banker who has helped to rob them. The artificial intrigue of the popular drama is quite gone. The story is told in the first act: the three remaining acts develop it along a descending line. It has little dramatic value, though there is a grimness in the unslackening pressure of disaster. It is not free from the faults of the old model, and its technique consists in telling the story without embellishment or artifice. That the perfection of such a technique would be the negation of drama is shown by the fact that the story, though told plainly, is arranged in such a way that the first act gives us the key to all the incidents that follow, and to the subsequent development of character. This it does, not by discussion among the characters themselves, but in little incidents arising naturally from the action. Its importance as drama lay in its undramatic nature. It proved that it was possible to write a play without mechanical intrigue or amateur psychology. In this it was a dramatic revelation. And the success of its second production at the Odéon in 1886 proved that it was also possible to make such a play of deep interest. Where the master of naturalist fiction had failed, Becque had succeeded. He wrote a later play, *La Parisienne*, but it adds nothing to his earlier achievement.

Naturalism as a dramatic creed had attained its first measure of success, and one year after the triumph of Becque at the Odéon, M. André Antoine established the first of the Free Theatres which spread the new drama over Europe. Here he produced the work of a group of playwrights who determined to present 'real life,' even though in fragments. M. Antoine himself was the soul of the movement, a man of savage energy, with the strength of personality that alone could have carried on the enterprise through eight years of hostility from public and critics alike. His productions, which were given before an audience summoned by formal invitation, included the plays of young Frenchmen of the new school, of Tolstoi, Strindberg, and Ibsen. It was Strindberg, in a preface to one of the plays written for this theatre, who demanded 'a theatre where we can be shocked by what is horrible, where we can laugh at what is laughable, where we can see life without shrinking back in terror if what has hitherto lain veiled behind theological or æsthetic preconceptions be suddenly revealed to us. Let us have a free theatre, where there is room for everything but incompetence, hypocrisy and stupidity.'

Among the French playwrights to whom M. Antoine lent his stage were some whose work has not lived beyond its hour, and some who at this day hold high rank, if by other qualities than dramatic mastery. Much of the work was of the violently partisan nature of M. Ancey's *Ces Messieurs*. Much of it failed by a meaningless insistence on dirt, crime and pain. All of it applied scientific methods to art in some way, in a pitiless adherence to the human document, in the scientific psychology of M. François de Curel, or in the scientific lecturing of M. Brieux. That playwright's contribution is a singularly innocuous little play. *Blanchette* is an innocent country girl who has been well educated. To satisfy ambitions thus roused she goes to Paris, presumably, since we are in the Théâtre Libre, to lead an immoral life. She returns, is forgiven, and retires into the pious obscurity whence she emerged. Very pretty, very innocent, very touching. But what is this amiable young playwright doing in M. Antoine's galley? Alas, why did he not continue to write comedies of real life, revised for middle-class consumption! Later, he discovered Ibsen, and the world and the devil. But that is another story.

François de Curel

The work of M. François de Curel is worth study, as typical of the best qualities of the movement, and the worst. The delineation of character, which in the Dumas play consisted in the discussion of each character by all the others, is here effected by a process of careful self-revelation. The action consists in the gradual laying bare of a character through a series of significant acts. In the Dumas play, the analytical discussion was usually got out of the way in the first act, by a shameless use of servants and friends. In M. de Curel's drama, as in most of the kind, it extended over the whole play. That is a pity when, as usually happens in the work of the naturalists, the characters are degenerate or victims of an *idée fixe*. He possesses, however, a more finished technique than most of the other playwrights of the Théâtre Libre, to whom avoidance of the mechanical plot meant most often avoidance of any plot at all. With an undoubted power of observation and a measure of technical skill, M. de Curel treats themes, too often pathological, in a fashion that precludes anything but a journalistic account of thoughts, events and emotions. Sometimes, as in *L'Envers d'une Sainte,* he is content with a careful psychological record: sometimes he turns to the exposal of wrong or folly. In *L'Envers d'une Sainte,* his gift for the delineation of character is employed in the study of a neurotic woman. Julie Renaudin has spent years in a convent where she fled after trying to kill the wife of the man she loved. After the man's death she returns to the world, and the unbalanced mind that led her to attempted murder now suggests vengeance on the widow. She gains an influence over her victim's daughter, and uses it to persuade her that she must enter a convent. The study of the two women and the young girl makes up the play; and of the three, Julie is the central figure. It is little more than a study in sexual pathology. The effect on a passionate woman of years of enforced celibacy would be the perversion of her passions. In the convent they might become religious ecstasy. Once outside it, they might as easily become a mania for revenge, as a mania for social reform, or a mania of any other kind. The play shows more than considerable talent, wasted on the analysis of an unreasonable female.

M. de Curel's later work has the same analytical skill in the development of idea or emotion. In *La Nouvelle Idole* science plays the rôle of villain; a Moloch to whom life is freely sacrificed. The play ends with the self-sacrifice of its leading scientist, in the unscientific spirit of atonement for an attempt to make a fatal experiment on a young girl. The leading characters all babble of science: from scientific psychology we approach scientific rant, of all kinds the worst. In this play, M. de Curel's faults and the faults of the group which had scattered long before it was written, are developed in an exaggerated form. The reliance on a record of observed facts is not productive of high drama. It transfers the methods of a side of science to art, and the result is neither science nor art but a bastard product in which the scientific procedure destroys the spirit of art. For a mere record cannot give that significance to life which is due from the artist. Nor, if scientific analysis be the end in view, is a drama the best means to such an end. Mere record, whether its aim be to rouse indignation, or to interest, will live only so long as the facts it records are new, startling or humanly interesting. When they cease to be these things, the play that contains them is dead. In fact, it is still-born, since no drama that contents itself with treating of to-day can live for to-morrow unless it embodies a truth or a spiritual valuation that is of lasting human significance.

This is the failure of the naturalists. They recorded life; they could not see beneath the superficial disorder the essentials of life that are themselves its eternal order and eternal significance. Therefore their work is fragmentary, meaningless. They did their work in their day, and when the Théâtre Libre came to an end, the impulse had spread over Europe. The new doctrine it preached had one effect on the drama of the north, which was divorced from the life of the people, as well as from all the traditions of the national dramatic literature; and another effect on the south, were tradition was still a force to be reckoned with. Before the impulse it gave could fail, Ibsen strengthened it, and altered its nature, and since his influence was stronger in the north than on the southern stage, he still further accentuated their differences. In England and Germany grew up a drama of ideas which took its model and its motive power from Ibsen. In Italy and Spain, the ideals of Naturalism mingled with traditional and other forces to produce a drama which neither rose to the old heights nor found new ones—nor achieved the sterility of the intellectual drama of the north. But this came later. The shock of Naturalism prepared the way for it, and roused the theatres of Europe to a troubled energy. So that when Ibsen came to rescue living dramatic art from chaos and death, he found the road half made for him.

The Russian Contribution

Among the plays performed on the stage of the Théâtre Libre was Tolstoy's *Powers of Darkness.* Its production marked the first real point of contact between the Russian drama and the drama of the rest of Europe. The influence of Russian writers on European literature has grown rapidly since that time, but it has been mainly the influence of the novelists. Save in rare instances, Russian drama has been neglected, although it has many of the qualities that make the work of the novelists suggestive and stimulating. Its influence at this time of change was nothing as compared with that of Ibsen and the naturalists, but its importance and interest are great. It has qualities that make it impossible to treat of it with the other dramas of northern Europe. When England and Germany were still labouring after Sardou, Russia possessed a drama as closely allied to the national life as it was instinct with the national spirit. Since, in the comedies of Sumarakov, their drama won its earliest independence, Russian dramatists have concerned themselves with a realism of many phases. Their social and political life is cramped and stifled, and their artistic life is so much the more a serious and a passionate reality. There is nothing in Europe to equal the depth of interest shown by the Russian audience in the criticism of art, or the consummate care and the tireless intelligence given so readily to the Moscow Art Theatre. Their drama lives as Russia lives, hopes when Russia hopes, despairs, aspires, and is the soul of their artistic life. The reality which the greatest of their artists seek is not the reality of Zola, the partial reality of external facts. It is a far wider conception. Life as they have sought it is not an accumulation of little events and insignificant lives. To see it so is given to all of us, the blindest and the meanest. The artist must do more. 'Truth in art is the unity of a thing with itself—the outward rendered expressive of the inward: the soul made incarnate: the body instinct with spirit.' The realists of Russia have ever sought this truer reality; even their folk novelists, who seem to fulfil the ideal of the naturalists, created their men and women living types as well as particular personalities. Depicting life with a power of observation that has not been surpassed, they have sought also to value it. When the Englishman reflects on life, it is borne in on him that the land question is at the root of all misery; or if he be a thinker of unusual depth, that something is wrong with the morals of his neighbours. Teutonic speculation, digging round the question, becomes entangled in a singularly unsubstantial mysticism. The Russian mind, forced inward by its heritage of repression, questions the value of life itself, realising that it must find a value and a meaning or become artistically futile. And few of her artists have not had a measure of success. Nevertheless, an intense power of introspection is a dangerous gift. It probes so deeply that it rejects false realism, but saps the exuberance of vitality which must be the artist's gift to the life he takes. A realisation of the problem of life, a passionate effort to solve it, are not enough for him, if he have not too a sense of superabundant power, an insatiable need to spend his creative activity. This, by its nature and by the conditions of its life, the Russian artistic spirit has not yet. Hence although the need to make of life a significant whole is the soul of Tchekhov's drama, the reality it suggests remains shadowy and elusive. He lacks the excess of artistic vitality. It is not enough that an artist seek the meaning of life: he must have the power to impose a meaning upon it. And this he cannot do by ceaseless question, but by virtue of a need that will not be satisfied until he has made the world anew. It is not the creative instinct that these Russians lack: that they have in abundance. But their creative instinct has to grapple with a torturing distrust of life, and it weakens their power to realise for us the ultimate reality they have felt. Distrust of life has no part in the creative spirit; and in the struggle between them, the deeper realities grow dim to our sight. This is truest of Tchekhov; of all dramatists most sensitive to the subtle changes that transform into falsehood the truth we seized, so that one day we look and are startled at the change. Others of his countrymen have been content with one imagined truth. Tolstoi finds his answer to life's problem in the life of the peasants, but fails utterly to realise it in his drama. There, he is the crudest of naturalists. Gorki, with a somewhat more robust dramatic vision, sees the promise of the future in the outcasts of the streets, and fails almost as badly as Tolstoi. But all of them are concerned with the problem of life itself, and the more stern their need to answer its riddle the more close their hold on external reality. This is the first quality of Russian literature It is the spiritual side of that power of observation which makes them masters in the presentment of phases of life as in a consummate analysis of character. The Russian dramatist seems to create character as easily as the French dramatist creates situations. This power marks the earlier Russian drama of the nineteenth century, written before the new life of the seventies had died in a blackness of despair, turning the Russian spirit against itself to enter the later phase of doubt and dissatisfaction.

Ostrovski

The plays of Ostrovski are the final achievement of this early, less complex drama. Ostrovski is not a great dramatist: the comparative narrowness of his range forbids it, and a certain lack of distinction. But within his limits he is an unsurpassed creator of personality. His fifty dramas and comedies contain hardly a character not vividly conceived and vividly presented. For the most part, he deals only with the one section of society, the merchants of the provinces. In his plays the family life of the middle-classes of his time is shown at its worst. The head of the family had a power over the body and soul of its members which made their life the most hopeless and meanest form of slavery. To this slavery, Dobrolúbov, writing on Ostrovski in the leading Russian review, gave the name of *The Kingdom of Darkness*. Ostrovski has dealt faithfully with this kingdom. It passes before our eyes with a vividness and fullness of life that makes its shadowy places live for ever in the memory. Here are the two sides of the Russian character, the despot and the weakling; here the meaningless cruelty which lay so heavily on youth; the pity of crushed lives, 'the tears that flow behind these bolts, unseen, unheard of'; and here, too, a humour lifting his plays above the intolerable, and ever in despair the knowledge of the future. There is little attempt at constructive art; the people of his plays wander through them in the haphazard way of life. Withal, there is a development of action, and a deepening significance in the characters, beyond the art of the photographic realist. In *The Storm*, a young wife is pushed to her death by the harshness of her mother-in-law and the weakness of her husband. But though she dies, the struggling of her spirit is a deathless element.

So in a sense, all these plays are plays of the dawn, though they are woven of the blackness of night and the dawn is heavy with rain. By virtue of this spirit, and of its living men and women, Ostrovski's drama will not soon lose force and charm. Its humour contrasts sharply with the greater part of Russian drama, wherein humour becomes more often irony, bitter or sad. There is neither bitterness nor tears in the laughter of *The Storm*. Dikoy terrorises his household and comes to the equally despotic Madame Kabanova to tell her of the inconvenience his temper gives him. She is the only person whom he cannot cow, and therefore the only one with whom he cares to speak. 'No, you hold your tongue! Listen to me! I'll tell you the sort of troubles that happen to me. I had fasted and was all ready for sacrament in Lent, and then the evil one thrusts a wretched peasant under my nose. He had come for money—for wood he had supplied us. And for my sins he must needs show himself at a time like that! I fell into sin, of course, I pitched into him, pitched into him finely, I did, all but thrashed him. There you have it, my temper! Afterwards, I asked his pardon, bowed down at his feet, upon my word, I did. It's the truth I'm telling you, I bowed down at a peasant's feet. That's what my temper brings me to: on the spot there, in the mud, I bowed down at his feet before every one—I did.'

Tolstoi

After Ostrovski, the drama entered upon another phase. It became less simple; the movement of the young people, the hopes of the reign of Alexander II., and the bitter disillusion of his successors passed over it and left their mark. Tolstoi's plays are typical of this time. Plays such as those of Ostrovski are no longer possible: the drama must reflect the revolt and misery of a harsher struggle; transcend it if it can, but at least realise it. As a dramatist Tolstoi could not keep ahead of his age: he could not even translate into drama the ideal of his novels and his essays. His plays are as crudely naturalist as any that passed through M. Antoine's hands. *Powers of Darkness*, the one play that has had European standing, is a tale of horror. The peasants live a life little better than that of beasts; the women, as always, sunk lower than the men. The only honest man stammers incoherently; and Matriona, his wife, proud of her seventy-seven tricks, despises him for his weakminded idealism. Adultery, murder and seduction, form the action. There is no touch of beauty, no constructive power: the play is ended violently by Nikita's confession in a religious ecstasy, that he has killed his illegitimate child in horrible fashion. There is a certain grim power in it, but neither restraint nor inspiration. It is a hideous story, baldly told. There is nothing to lift it above the level of all naturalist drama, and since it has in it nothing of value for to-morrow, must even die to-day.

His other plays are still less worthy the name of drama. *The Fruits of Enlightenment* concerns itself with the follies of the upper classes. It is very wearisome, and as feeble in its drawing of character as in construction. *The Man who was Dead* is an unsuccessful story of the lovable scoundrel. Tolstoi is not in any sense a dramatist: in proportion as he attempts psychological study, and abandons his own philosophy of life, he fails the more utterly. *Powers of Darkness* has behind it all his love for the peasants and his conviction that in them he had found an answer to the problem of life. In *The Fruits of Enlightenment*, though it lacks the power of the earlier play, he is treating of a life he knew. But *The Man who was Dead* is an attempt at absolute dramatic vision, and a complete failure. His plays share with those of the

French naturalists the merit of a relative sincerity: and like them are neither good drama nor true reality.

Strindberg

Both of these forces of Naturalism, French and Russian, met on the stage of the Théâtre Libre. At that same theatre, M. Antoine produced the plays of Strindberg, whose dramatic work is at once the complete expression of the naturalist movement and its supreme attainment. We call him naturalist, and his best work is work done under that standard. But in point of fact its greatness consists in its transcendence of Naturalism. His dramatic creed rules out photographic realism as it rules out evasive romance. The tragedy of the naturalist is too often a story of pain and weakness, which is horrible and depressing, but never tragic. Tragedy is born when the human soul pits its utmost strength against the utmost strength of whatever gods may be, gods of faith, of circumstance, of character. It is born of the deepest pain and the supreme moments of conflict. Submission to external pressure can only breed mediocrity, and it follows that Strindberg's greatest plays are plays of revolt. His tragedies are the tragedies of exceptional people in conflict with exceptional circumstance. At a time when half the dramatic world was preparing to chase a hundred doubtful reforms, Strindberg has not a single play that belongs to the moral and social propaganda of the modern intellectual drama. He does not ignore the movements of his day; as much as any other dramatist he is expressive of its doubt and tumult. He realises more clearly than any of them that half the progress we have acclaimed is false and evanescent. The most clamorous movement of all, the feminist, has had no more savage opponent. But for the most part his plays are set in a world where the passions of hate and love, faith and despair, are the springs of action. He knew that in pain is born the greatest joy, and that only by facing it may a man know his strength. His weakness is that he never triumphs over pain, save in a mystical resignation that is no triumph at all. He destroys, rebels; his men and women are torn by a conflict of passions. And they remain crying out against their misery. He is in some sense a one-sided Nietzsche : hating submission and self-deception, but without the power to rejoice. It is his failure.

His dramatic work falls into three sections. During the early part of his career it had a romantic setting curiously at variance with the hardships of his life at the time. His first course at the university was cut short by poverty, and he became a badly paid teacher. *The Outlaw* brought him a royal grant and he returned to college. Afterwards he was student of medicine, actor, editor, hackwriter, and novelist. In 1875 he became a librarian at the Royal Library in Stockholm, and what is more important for his literary development, he married. The story of this marriage is written in *A Fool's Confession*, and it makes depressing reading. At first he seems to have been roused to greater activity. To this time belong two romantic and historical plays, *The Secret of the Guild*, and *Sir Bengt's Lady*, and an allegorical play of singular feebleness. Then came the first part of *Marriage*, a collection of short stories. They criticised the women's movement, but for the most part were not hostile to it. He was bitterly attacked by the feminists, and his own marriage grew more intolerable. Two years later, the second part of *Marriage* marks the end of his first literary phase. The drama begun in 1887 with *The Father* is the most powerful drama of the new school. Strindberg now is sceptic and materialist : he is insistent for the masculine supremacy which he believed threatened by the feminist movement and its male supporters. He held woman the inferior being, inferior mentally, morally and biologically, and equality between the sexes possible only when man drops to woman's level. Much of his characteristic work belongs to this time; a series of plays in which he transformed the creed of the naturalists by a dramatic power far beyond their reach; stories of the people on the islands between Stockholm and the open sea; and five autobiographical novels distinguished by a gift for analysis and a disregard of artistic restraint.

In 1895 he was lost in scientific experiments. He dreamed of the transmutability of elements and worked with a feverish absorption that ruined his health. At the same time he was passing through a spiritual hell. The story of his tortured journey in an underworld of mental and physical weariness is told in *The Inferno*. It is the story of a mind completely unbalanced, and suffering from persecution mania. Thus it belongs to the scientist's record of mental pathology and should be so regarded. That Strindberg survived the struggle is a tribute to the essential sanity of his nature. It left him a mystic of the tribe of Swedenborg. The world seemed a transitory state of punishment; peace was attainable only through resignation, humility, and kindness towards all men. In his *Speeches to the Swedish Nation*, written in 1910, he presents the view of life that is beneath all his later work. 'For only through religion or the hope of something better, and the recognition of the innermost meaning of life as that of an ordeal, a school or perhaps a penitentiary, will it be possible to bear the burdens of life with sufficient resignation.'

This state of mind is responsible for *To Damascus*, which contains much excellent philosophy of life, much of that uncanny clear sight revealing feelings and motives we are careful to hide, and is marked by a total lack of dramatic power. Indeed the plays in which Strindberg is most insistent on a symbolic meaning in life are those in which he is least successful as a dramatist. In parts of his drama the memory of his spiritual Gehenna deepens his power of suggestion and widens his conception of life until it is seen to be eternally creating itself in every moment and through every act. But his attempts to force a mystical faith into dramatic form are failures in so far as they rely on symbolism. The best works of this period are those which follow the method of the naturalist plays, with their more than naturalistic conflict and power, adding to them a clearer dramatic vision. All the plays written at this time are the work of a realist. The historical plays are virile studies of real people, but they lack the distinction of great national drama. In the trio of dream-plays, *Swanwhite, The Crown Bride,* and *The Dream Play,* real life, fantasy, and symbolism destroy each other. Five *Chamber Plays* written for the 'Intimate Theatre' at Stockholm, are as savagely real as any of his earlier work; but they have the suggestion of hidden forces, surrounding and dominating the human spirit. His great dramas are always dramas of realism, a realism which transcends mere record. But whereas *Miss Julia* is the story of conflicting forces embodied in a man and woman, intensely real, the *Spook Sonata* of these *Chamber Plays,* not a whit less real, moves through forces alien to humanity. *Miss Julia* relies on the concentrated power of its vision of reality: the *Spook Sonata* on the skill with which reality is made to suggest the working of a power more than natural.

Strindberg has written great dramas, yet it is difficult to call him a great dramatist. His work is one-sided. With the exception of the historical and fairy plays, it is pessimistic in the highest sense of the term. The pessimism of his best work admits of no wailing. Though there be neither rest nor hope, neither is there weak submission, save for cowards and slaves. Eternal strife and eternal courage is the whole duty of man. Nothing is here for weakness, and nothing for rejoicing. Strindberg's counsel is the counsel of despair. It may inspire a man to live, but it cannot inspire him to live joyously. It values life at the lowest, and in the face of that, demands the highest courage. Such a conception of life may create great drama, but if it lack the strength to find joy as well as courage in the strife, it is but half of the supreme achievement.

Life in his plays appears always as conflict, conflict of sex with sex, class with class. It is not a struggle for life only: that would lower the dramatic value of his characters by making them fight like rats in a trap. It is the struggle for power, strength measured against strength in an eternal war. In *Miss Julia* it is the conflict of the decadent aristocratic ideal with the rising democracy; in *The Father*, in *Comrades*, it is the strife of the sexes. In *The Dance of Death* it is a war between two forces of hatred and evil. In whatever shape, conflict is the motive power of his characteristic drama. And since it is a conflict of passions rather than the conflict of man and society or man and conventional morality, it turns most often on the question of sex. In its usual literary connotation the word has come to mean sexual passion, and has been responsible for an incredible amount of wearisome nonsense. There are only two safe ways of treating sexual love in literature: as a fantastic jest of the gods against humanity, or in its proper place as one among the other human appetites, which may inspire to great deeds or noble words, but in themselves are—appetites. Only so is the subject safe in the hands of the vast second-rate. In Strindberg's drama sexual passion holds its proper subordinate place. But the division of sex appealed to him as an elemental force. Between man and woman he saw a ceaseless struggle for power; their very love a conflict, the under side of which is hate. He regarded the demand of woman for equality with a savage dislike, since in threatening masculine supremacy it added one more element of bitterness to the war of sex. Further than that, it could only succeed when man had become so weak that he permitted woman to usurp his power. The very existence of the movement was a symptom of weakness. His hatred of the feminist came to fill a large place in his work: it inspired the characteristic woman of his plays, the vampire woman who is very like the Marie of his *Confessions of a Fool*. She is selfish, taking all, with nothing to give; she translates liberty into lawlessness and irresponsibility; in abandoning her habits of convention, she has lost her semblance of morality. She is utterly incapable of any conception of honour, and has neither the brains nor the nobility to appreciate the need for self-restraint. If she claims comradeship with man, she proves herself totally unfitted to understand the meaning of the word. If she is clever, she sucks the man's strength, absorbing his ideas and leaving him spiritually destitute. If she has no mental power, she makes use of a cunning that as surely undermines a man's character and leaves him helpless in her hands.

Strindberg did indeed overestimate both the danger and the strength of the feminist. It is true that the clever woman is too often lacking in a quality hard to define: call it soul, imagination, or what you will. Her cleverness is of the aggressively capable order: it lacks not only initiative, and in some sense the aristocratic confidence of the masculine mind, but a certain imaginative breadth. There is justification for Strindberg's dislike of the average feminist; she appears to claim the liberty to do everything she likes, while forbidding man the same privilege. The marriage rate among educated women is steadily decreasing; the cheerful irresponsibility of the Noras of revolting womanhood would be ludicrous if it were not suicidal. Moreover, they have rejected the virtues of their predecessors, and failed to fulfil their promises of finer things. As comrades they are, in general, dismal failures; as social reformers often purblind reactionaries. But it is a poor man, a man as weak as the Father of Strindberg's play, that lets himself be dominated by a greedy or a cunning woman, when the illusion of sex love is gone. Strindberg's vision was narrow. The traits of his first wife, as he drew her in *The Confession of a Fool*, appear in all the vampire women of his drama. Since he himself was held to her against his will, sex-obsessed, he judged her strength and the strength of all women by his weakness. So intense was his fear that man's folly would mean rule by feminine monsters of selfishness and childish pride that his attack loses by its exaggeration. Nevertheless it tells the truth on many things that it needs a brave man to say at a time when feminists, male and female, are grown so arrogant. For woman as mother and as mother-wife Strindberg's drama shows the usual reverence, with the unusual addition of unsentimental sincerity.

But it is characteristic of him that his greatest feminine characters are in the likeness of the women he hated. In *The Creditors* he creates the vampire woman with a ruthless power that places her among dramatic types. To understand his hatred of her is to have appreciated the dramatic impulse of one half his work. *The Creditors* has only three characters: Thelka, Adolph, her artist-husband, and Gustav, the husband she divorced. The drama is in the form of three dialogues, and the three figures are revealed in their own words with supreme skill. At times they lose their particular significance, and appear greater than life, types for eternity. Adolph is the utter weakness of defeated manhood, Gustav the ruthlessness of man's revenge, Thelka, the fiend-woman, with a humanity that Strindberg is apt to withhold from her type. The action is formed by the interplay of the three natures, in which the influence of Gustav gradually draws on the tragedy. In the first dialogue he is talking to Adolph, who does not know him. Thelka has gone away, and all Adolph's strength has gone with her. Gustav is able with a fiendish skill to put his own will in the place of Adolph's dying one. He persuades him that in sculpture he will regain his artistic power. Adolph is convinced, inspired, until Gustav asks him suddenly—'Do you really believe in sculpture': his faith collapses and he replies 'No.' His power over Adolph being complete, Gustav goes on to replace Adolph's conception of Thelka by his own. Through the shadows of their speech the figure of the woman grows clearer. Adolph is forced to realise that she has taken all from him, knowledge, faith, courage. 'It was I who blew her faith in herself into flame; blew on it until I lost my own breath,' and later—'It is queer that sometimes I have a feeling that she is nothing in herself, but only a part of me.' This woman of second-rate brain and third-rate soul receives no quarter. The obscurity of her nature is neither reserve nor depth, but stupidity: she scorns Adolph's ideas because she fears his superior mental power and readily accepts the same ideas coming from his friends. Think of her in trousers, and at once she sinks to her place as an ordinary mind, on a level with the man whose brains you judge without favour, as commonplace and imitative. An undeveloped man, an overdeveloped child, 'What can you expect of such a nature?'

Probably you will get, as with Thelka, the usual result: third-rate work, and what is infinitely more damning, inability to realise that it is third-rate. The husband of such a woman is caressed and mothered if he remain quiescent, scorned if he revolt. Respect, comradeship and tolerance, if she be capable of them at all, are kept for friends and strangers. Throughout the conversation between the two men, Thelka is slowly created before Adolph's eyes. Gustav plays on his soul as an artist. He will take his debt from Thelka for the strength of which she robbed him, as she has robbed this other man. Adolph also she shall pay in full, but the settlement will be Gustav's vengeance on him.

In the next dialogue, between Adolph and Thelka, the spirit of Gustav's revenge leers between the lines. He has destroyed Thelka, and ignorant of the cause, she sees herself fallen before her husband. Adolph grows momentarily strong; his mind, cleared of illusion by Gustav's subtle suggestion and moving under Gustav's influence, sees their relationship without the glamour of sex. A cynical coquette, she has taken all he could give, and now patronises his helplessness, calling him 'little brother,' the common mask of dead passion. It is essential to understand the intensity of Strindberg's distrust of the feminist, and his utter disbelief in the cant of comradeship. The surest way is through quotation: take the words of Adolph, clear-sighted for the first time:—

'Do you remember how it was while the storm swept over us? Then you lay there like an infant in arms and just cried. Then you had to sit on my lap, and I had to kiss your eyes to sleep . . . I had to talk courage into you until my mouth was dry, and my head ached. I had to make myself believe I was strong. I had to force myself into believing in the future. And so I brought you back to life when you seemed already dead. Then you admired me. Then I was the man—not that kind of athlete you had just left, but the man of will-power, the man who instilled new nervous energy into your flabby muscles and charged your empty brain with a new store of electricity. And then I gave you back your reputation. I brought you new friends, furnished you with a little court of people, who, for the sake of friendship to me, let themselves be lured into admiring you. I set you to rule me and my house. Then I painted my best pictures, glimmering with reds and blues on backgrounds of gold, and there was not an exhibition then where I didn't hold a place of honour. . . . And I turned public attention in your direction. I compelled the clamorous herd to see you with my own infatuated vision. I plagued them with your personality, forced you down their throats, until that sympathy which makes everything possible became yours at last, and you could stand on your own feet. When you reached that far my strength was used up, and I collapsed from the overstrain—in lifting you up I had pushed myself down. I was taken ill, and my illness seemed an annoyance to you, at the moment when all life had just begun to smile at you —and sometimes it seemed to me as if in your heart there was a secret desire to get rid of your creditor, and the witness of your rise. Your love began to change into that of a grown-up sister, and for lack of better I accustomed myself to the new part of little brother. Your tenderness for me remained and even increased, but it was mingled with a suggestion of pity that had in it a good deal of contempt. And this changed into open scorn as my talent withered and your own sun rose brighter. But in some mysterious way the fountain-head of your inspiration seemed to dry up when I could no longer replenish it—or rather when you wanted to show its independence of me. And at last both of us began to lose ground. And then you looked for somebody to put the blame on. A new victim! For you are weak, and can never carry your own burden of debt and guilt. And so you picked me for a scapegoat and doomed me to slaughter. But when you cut my thews you didn't realise that you were also crippling yourself, for by this time our years of common life had made twins of us. You were a shoot sprung from my stem, and you wanted to cut yourself loose before the shoot had put out roots of its own, and that's why you couldn't grow by yourself. And my stem could not spare its main branch—and so stem and branch must die together.'

Thelka's reply shows her utterly incapable of imaginative understanding, bowdlerising all subtlety of thought—'What you mean, with all this, of course, is that you have written my books.' Her debt to Adolph is paid: her other creditor is more exacting. During the third dialogue Adolph sits in an adjoining room, while Gustav finishes his work. He has destroyed Adolph's faith in himself and in Thelka, and now he destroys the last rag of her self-illusion. As Adolph listens, he hears Thelka agree to take Gustav as her lover: strength and faith fail together, and he dies. Thelka's debt to Gustav is paid in full, for she loved Adolph. As a drama, the construction of the play is masterly, hardly surpassed in the modern theatre. As a study of the new faith he hated and feared, it is Strindberg's finest effort.

Strindberg's drama never approached greatness until he became the master of realism. His early plays are weak. *The Outlaw* is the story of an exiled Viking who hates his daughter for her Christian faith.

He dies beaten to an acceptance of it. The action wavers towards a struggle of the old gods against the new 'White Christ,' but Erl Thorfinn has no faith save a dubious confidence in his own strength. The play is slight; there is no progress, mental or spiritual. Thorfinn himself is badly drawn. A Viking, he is given to elaborate soliloquy. When he faces death for his crimes, the loneliness of his position drives him to his knees before the new god; he dies from his wounds, murmuring 'Eternal—creating—God.' We do not believe it. The later Strindberg is foreshadowed in the harsh Valgend.

VALGEND (putting her hand against Gunlöd's heart): You have a secret!
GUNLÖD: Yes, mother, yes.
VALGEND: Hide it well.
GUNLÖD: Oh, I must speak, I can't bear it any longer.
VALGEND: When saw you a mother who did not know a daughter's secret?
GUNLÖD: Who told you mine?
VALGEND (harshly): Dry your eyes.

There is some insight in the drawing of Gunlöd, and her woman's path to religion. First she believed in her father, because he was strong; then in her mother because she was good; then in her lover because he was both good and strong; these failed her and her need to rely on some one brought her to Christ. Apart from such small virtues, *The Outlaw* is nothing but a romantic episode: it suggests a spirtual change without realising it in action, and no single character has any depth of thought or feeling.

Written during these years is an allegorical play which exaggerates all the worst features of his later symbolic plays. After some incomprehensible babbling, 'Lucky Peter' departs in search of happiness. He cannot find it as a rich man, a reformer, or a Caliph. Last of all, Nature fails him, and here his troubles end in the arms of a peasant girl. Strindberg declares that the play is meant only for children. The philosophising of the puppets would bore any proper child, as would the execrable dullness of the story.

It is difficult to believe that only five years passed between this monument of futility and the first of his naturalist plays. During this time he was learning a hatred of the comrade wife and the cant of equality-with-man that became savagely articulate in the second part of *Marriage.* At the same time his intellectual independence developed. It was helped by the passion for knowledge characteristic of his best work, and when he turned to the work of the French naturalists it was as a master, accepting the canons of their faith to re-create it. Their tendency towards the merely imitative displeased him, as did their readiness to treat all facts of life as equally productive of good drama. He rejected the arbitrary psychology of the old drama—'And what also will offend simple brains is that my action cannot be traced back to a single motive, that the view-point is not always the same. An event in real life . . . springs generally from a whole series of more or less deep-lying motives, but of these the spectator chooses, as a rule, the one his reason can master most easily, or else the one reflecting most favourably on his power of reasoning. A suicide is committed. Bad business, says the merchant. Unrequited love, say the ladies. Sickness, says the sick man. Crushed hopes, say the shipwrecked. My souls (or characters) are conglomerate, made up of past and present stages of civilisation, scraps of humanity, torn-off pieces of Sunday clothing turned into rags—all patched together as in the human soul itself.' But he took care that the souls he created were exceptional souls, caring not 'whether they be beautiful or ugly, so that they be only great.' And since a character or an action seems ugly only when it depresses or exhausts us, in Strindberg's 'terrible moments' there is nothing ha ugly. There is the beauty and graciousness of power. Where his drama leaves nothing but a sense of its ugliness it will be found that it is neither terrible nor powerful.

The plays written during these years are of his finest work. They hold great strength within narrow limits. Their characters are more than individuals; they are types created in the individual. For the most part symmetry, restraint, and insistence upon essentials lift these plays towards greatness. It is in so far as they depart from these qualities that they fail. Some fault mars each of them. In *The Father* it is the lack of symmetry caused by his excessive weakness; in *Miss Julia*, the spiritual anatomy of Julia and Jean the valet is so clear that for moments we see them as two skeletons. They are not merely neurotic woman and sensual servant, but they become so at times because the power that made them types of death and life has exhausted itself in analytical psychology. Some of the plays of this time are naturalist and nothing more: Strindberg at his best is the supreme dramatist of modernity, having then Ibsen's power of concentration, with a greater detachment of vision. At his worst he is either a purblind imitator of reality, or a symbolist of the feeblest order. Pity that he is too often both.

The Father was the first play of this second period; and it is certainly the finest. The action is simple: a man is driven to apparent madness by the doubts his wife throws on the paternity of their child. That is all: it holds the ruthless strife of sex, and beyond that the passionate love of a man for his child, the bearer of his immortality. Essentially, it is a struggle for power. In the child the spirit of the man or woman who dominated it lives for ever. It is for immortality that Laura and the Captain fight. She is determined to keep her daughter under her guidance. To this end she uses every method cunning suggests to get rid of a husband who has always wearied her. The father himself is weak, incredibly weak. His spasmodic irritation makes it clear from the beginning of the play that he is bordering on a nervous breakdown. He knows that Laura is plotting to get rid of him, that she is spreading reports of his insanity. And he feels neither anger nor resentment. He acts in a way only admissible on the supposition that he is so feeble-minded as almost to qualify him immediately for a madhouse. He crawls for mercy. 'My feelings are more or less under my control, as my will has not been completely undermined; but you have gnawed and nibbled at it so that it will soon slip the cogs and then the whole mechanism will slip and go to smash. I will not appeal to your feelings, for you have none; that is your strength. But I will appeal to your interests. . . . You have succeeded in arousing my suspicions to such an extent that my judgment is no longer clear, and my thoughts begin to wander. This is the approaching insanity that you are waiting for, which may come at any time now.'

He begs her to tell him the truth about their child. The suspicion she roused in his mind has only been working a few hours, but he is crazed with anxiety. This is the first fruit of his folly during the years when he permitted her to wear out his nervous strength. If he had been a man and not a series of neurotic spasms, he would have tried a physical remedy. Laura is an insect and requires crushing.

She has no mind to appreciate his agony, or soul to respond to it. He fought vainly with the weapons of mind and soul; she would have understood a fire-shovel better. Strindberg has irrevocably weakened his play by making the antagonists in this sex struggle a weak-willed, nervous scientist and a woman of low cunning. That she had no feelings we might have forgiven: many women have no feelings; they have instincts and acquired sentimentality. But that she has neither mental nor spiritual worth lessens the power of the whole drama.

Towards the end the play is marred by a hint of crudeness. Up to a certain point the dramatic tension gathers strength. As the study of a mind, weakened by years of worry, the scenes are good. The Captain responds sharply to Laura's subtlety. He thinks that he has had suspicions before, and he will not believe her assurance when she gives it. A little shadowy at first, he becomes clearer as we understand that his whole life has made it impossible for him to assert himself now. He was an unwanted child, lonely and weak-natured. When he married Laura, she treated him as a child, and was satisfied with her sense of power. His assertion of virility annoyed and puzzled her. As a mother she loved him, but 'the woman was your enemy, and love between the sexes is strife.' He had dreamed of her greatness of soul: when the illusion left him he awoke to ambition. Then she robbed him of the scientific honour he had toiled for, destroying his orders for the books he needed. Something akin to jealousy moved her at the prospect of his fame. Success for him meant the establishment of her inferiority; and she fought against it instinctively. As the action develops, it loses subtlety. Either Laura is so sure of her power and his weakness that she gives up pretence when she tells him the extent of her treachery. Or if she wished to provoke him, she succeeded, and he flings a lamp at her. But this is not sufficient to prove him insane, and the doctor whom Laura deceives is very unconvincing. He takes Laura's word for the Captain's delusions, and actually asks her whether she considers her husband's outburst one of passion or of madness. He has not had the Captain under observation one day, but on her reply says that it would be better to treat him immediately as insane. True, the Captain thinks himself insane, but it is obvious that his mind is only temporarily unhinged. An *idée fixe* has taken possession of him with incredible rapidity. If he be mad in truth, the very act on which his wife based her charge is unconvincing. A man who becomes insane in the way that Laura suggests the Captain has done is subtle and shifty. He would not throw lamps about: he would cringe or caress, or pretend helplessness, and then suddenly strike. His insanity would be credible if he had wrung his hands, cried to see the proof of her betrayal, and then swiftly executed judgment on his fair lady. His acts are not those of a madman, as any doctor would have seen. This crudeness confuses and lessens the force of the action, but it is a little sin in comparison with the shadowiness of the Father. He is so incredibly weak that only the passion of Strindberg speaking through the mask could save him for drama. If you must make your plays of the fiend-woman, pray do not let her success be so easy by giving her a reed to bruise.

Withal it is a great drama, and has great scenes. There is the Captain's bitter cry that all his life is of no use, if now he is childless and must die utterly. He has worked for his wife and child and found himself, as have other men, unwanted in his home. It is not happiness or even the truth for which he cries, but for immortal life itself. Again there is the utmost dramatic intensity in the scene with his child who, in answer to his tortured pleading, says that she must be herself and not her father or any other. And in the trust with which he lets the old nurse trick him into the strait jacket. But the power of the play lies first and foremost in the two themes that inspire it. The minor theme is the truth, little heeded to-day, that the domination of woman is possible only over the weakness of man. If a woman possesses strength of intellect, only fineness of soul hinders her desire for dominion. Few such women can brook the taking of equality from the hands of a man, strongly and finely masculine. They talk of equality: they can neither appreciate it nor permit it. Their love is given most readily to masculine weakness. To a man desiring sympathy and comradeship they will give, so long as he will play the part, a mother-love that weakens and leaves him unsatisfied. They hate his assertion of independent strength, both because it destroys their hold on him, and is evidence of a strength greater than theirs. They must have weakness to prove to themselves their own power.

The power that moves the play is the fierce love of children that is Strindberg's own. There is no immortality save through the child—'I do not believe in a hereafter: the child was my future life. That was my conception of immortality.' The tragedy is not the tragedy of the Captain; he was a man of straw—but of 'the father.' It is a man's bitter cry for his child, the spirit of life itself striving against annihilation—'My child? A man has no children: it is only woman who has children, and therefore the future is hers when we die childless.'

In all Strindberg's drama this play is the greatest in conception; and in execution not far short of greatness, having restraint and intense dramatic concentration

Somewhat the same qualities appear in *Miss Julia*, the terrible study of a neurotic woman. If it were only that, the play would take its place with other exhibitions of sexual pathology. But it is more: it is a vision of life and death, growth and decay. The aristocrat, weak-willed and sex-obsessed, is the last of a family that is perishing of senile decay. The valet into whose arms she throws herself belongs to a dominant race, one that is rising as the Count's family dies. In him present and future fight for supremacy. He is master and slave. The qualities of both make his strength, the slave's brutality, together with the master's self-confidence and lack of sentiment. Other instincts of the slave he has, which will disappear in three generations. Through acquired refinement the slave and the menial speak and act. He has grown to appreciate good wine, he speaks correctly, and has taught himself French; but it comes naturally to him to tell his master's daughter that the servants will talk if she dances with him again. He has imagination enough to weave her a pretty romance: later he is sufficiently merciless to tell her that he lied, and did but colour 'the same nasty thoughts that all boys have.' He has the slave's instinctive awe of the aristocrat. 'There will be barriers between us as long as we stay in this house,' he tells Miss Julia; 'there is the past, and there is the Count—and I have never met another person for whom I felt such respect. If I only catch sight of his gloves on a chair I feel small.' But in his heart he knows himself finer than that—'You see, backs have to be bent, but not mine. . . . There's better stuff in me—character—and if only I get hold of the first branch, you'll see me do some climbing.' He is the force that creates: she, besides being a woman, is a force that is dying to make way for a new one. Their essential difference shows in their attitude to the moment of sexual passion. Miss Julia is neurotic; and her perverted upbringing has intensified a natural incapacity for self-restraint. Her peculiar mental condition is seen in her wild dancing, her unashamed preference for Jean, and her familiar conversation with him. She deliberately excited his passion to gratify her own, and the self-loathing that follows is terrible to witness. But she is devoid of all self-control. He has shown her brutally that his respect for her is gone, although the sight of her degradation is almost intolerable and he finds himself saying—'It hurts me to see you sinking so low that you are far below your own cook—it hurts me as it hurts to see autumn flowers beaten down by the rain and turned to mud.' But after all her revolt and his terrible frankness she can sink to tempting him again. To Jean the incident means little. He has no intention of letting it interfere with his plans for the future. But she falls hopelessly into a whirlpool of hysterical emotion. She cannot live under the same roof with him after her fall. She catches at his plans for the management of a hotel, but is crushed by Christine's—'Do you believe in all that yourself?' Her old life is hateful to her pride; a new one impossible to her weakness. Jean himself sees the folly of trying to carry her on with him. At last she cries out in an anguish of pride, that is half longing for the end of a race she feels to be dying. Obeying Jean's stronger will she goes into another room to kill herself, as the Count rings for his valet, and 'that damned menial' is back in Jean's spine again.

If this were the mere study of sordid passion and an hysterical female, it would be as little worth considering as the sexual-intellectual drama of to-day. To its credit might be placed an extraordinary subtlety of construction. The whole play is almost entirely a series of dialogues, but never for one moment does the interest slacken. The words cut like a flail to the nerve and muscle of the action. So thorough is the dissection of the man and woman that they lose dramatic intensity thereby. They are forced upon us as two minds and two nervous systems, acting and re-acting in accordance with their own natures. This perception of them interferes at times with the perception of them as two elemental forces. That we do so perceive them is the greatness of the play. It is the most primitive of tragedies, the eternal decay and re-creation that is life. It is more than that. It is the gladness of the old gods to die, in making way for the youth and strength of a new faith.

Strindberg's work during this period is not all on this level. Some of the plays belong to the average realism of commonplace people with commonplace aims and passions. They have this advantage over the modern intellectual drama, that in copying life they succeed in capturing a little vitality also. *The Link*, though written later, belongs both in thought and spirit to the plays of this time. The Baron and his wife are in the divorce court. Both are anxious for the happiness of their child, yet cannot refrain from a public quarrel. The accusations which Strindberg makes against his wife in *The Confession of a Fool* reappear here. The Baron complains of his wife's familiar conversation with his steward (in the novel it is a man of the lower classes whom Marie meets in a public dining-room). He charges her with 'the employment of a notorious and tattling masseur for an ailment commonly treated by women,' with extravagance, laziness, refusal of his rights, and wearisome and unjustifiable complaints of a lost dowry. These are things that made the Fool's married life a hell.

The trial proceeds. In spite of the Baron's efforts and their mutual vows they gradually break into open dispute. Neither can shake off a jealous fear lest the other should be happy in the future. They must fight it out in spite of their son's good name. And both of them know that for all their hatred they are bound together, and that every wound stabs the giver more deeply than the victim. The child 'is the memory of our beautiful hours, the link that unites our souls, the common ground where we must ever meet without wishing to do so.' Against their will, they taunt each other into an equal degradation. In moments of sanity they try to save themselves and the child. But neither can trust the other. Terror-stricken, she begs him to drive the child to his mother's house, and afterwards they will fly together with him. He cannot believe in her, and takes him to the pastor. Thence it is impossible to rescue him when they are sentenced to a year's separation and their little delicate son given to the care of two peasants.

It is an ugly play; that is, an inartistic play. We are neither interested nor moved by the mud-flinging of two worthless people. It is painful and dramatically unjustifiable. One element of grace redeems the play from hopeless mediocrity; the passionate sincerity of Strindberg's belief that the child is an unbreakable link between a man and woman. These two hate, revile each other. Their sexual love and marriage has ended in the disaster of most marriages that fail to reach a placid and passionless tolerance. Their struggles for freedom tear apart flesh and blood; each must go through life maimed. They are held by an immortal spirit—'It is the yearning for continued existence that goads you into maintaining your hold. Our son has your body, but my soul, and that soul you cannot rid him of.'

The Link was written in 1897. Only a year earlier Strindberg had recovered health and balance after the tortures of mental derangement and spiritual doubt. The dramatic work that followed this crisis reflected its nature. All the plays of his naturalist period are marked by a restless desire for truth at all costs. Strindberg could not make that clear enough, emphatic enough. Their dialogue dissects the characters, laying bare mind and soul until we shrink from the merciless self-knowledge. The Strindberg of these plays was resolved to realise the truth, though it destroyed his mind. When he hovered near the madness he had courted, he saved himself by clutching at a doctrine of resignation. The powers of hell that torture man on earth have behind their masks the faces of the eternal gods. Reality, no longer substantial, becomes a shifting fantasy, hiding truth. The effect on his drama is two-fold. On the one hand it betrayed him into disregard of dramatic illusion in his plays of real life, or into a puppet-ridden symbolism. On the other, it produced his greatest play. The sustained power, the impersonal vision, the effortless mastery of *The Dance of Death* are the fruits of his fight for peace of soul.

Some of the symbolic plays of this third phase are almost as bad as they can be. I am at a disadvantage before most of our modern mystic and symbolic plays. The further I pursue the meaning, the further it recedes, until I am bewildered into supposing it too deep for me. The suggestion of concealed meaning is ultimately irritating. If there be a meaning why make an acrostic of it? If there be none it seems a pity to waste so long covering up the hole. Probably Strindberg meant *The Advent* to be apprehended in the soul. The souls of most of its readers will agree with little Thyra in its symbolic garden. 'This is dull, and I will go home.' I wrestled with this play, and can make nothing of it. The Devil appears as a repentant sinner, warning mankind: the supply of omens is unlimited: there is a little Playfellow, who is our Lord; and a wicked Judge and his wife who are to be tormented into righteousness. The whole play is a medley of figures, expressing no thought unless it be that sin must live out its own punishment, and suffering innocence triumph. This is sufficiently banal and dubious, and the pantomime figures that set it forth are not symbols, but labelled puppets. The symbolism is so mechanical that the mind involuntarily begins to search for a truth to give it life. But there is no truth. Plays of this kind are mere charlatanry. The beauty of symbolism is that in the things we see unseeing, it reveals a fiery spirit of truth. It is not that the tricks of a conjurer, moving chairs, opening doors, and the like, should be manufactured for the purposes of a stupid story. These things are not symbols. They were made with hands, and any meaning they pretend is not born of their spirit, but sewn on to them by the arbitrary will of the dramatist. Such a play is *The Advent*. It is not altogether stupid. The end of the Auction is nearly dramatic: the Judge is stoned 'according to the law of Moses! He knows no other law!' And the last scene of utter sordid misery is very like Hell. But on the whole it is typical of the worst qualities of Strindberg's symbolic drama. The characters are allegorical and arbitrary puppets; the thought is commonplace, the technique feeble.

Many of the plays of this time mingle realism and symbolism in a somewhat doubtful fashion. Some of them, including one of the five Chamber Plays, are successful; a real element of the supernatural moves beneath the reality. In other plays the effect of the mixture is very bad. Reality suffers and symbolism fails. The characters become the lay figures of Strindberg's new mystical resignation; truth of life and truth of spirit are neglected for an annoying insistence on the unnatural supernatural. *There are Crimes and Crimes* is typical of the dubious drama of this third dramatic phase. The dramatist's mastery of reality is gone, and with it his technical skill. In this play there are curious traces of the stage tricks of French society drama. Adolph enters just as Maurice speaks of 'the steps of reality' upon the stairs. Emile, the Abbé, and the other characters all have this habit of appearing to the moment. The insistent element of chance accords well with them. One and all, they are will-less creatures. Maurice cannot help deserting his wife and child; Adolph cannot help loving Henrietta; Henrietta cannot help attracting Maurice. Again and again the Abbé repeats—'This is not the work of a man.' Such weakness is the price Strindberg has paid for his peace of mind. In his early work he adopted too readily the current scientific doctrines of heredity and environment. His drama saved itself by his power in the creation of exceptional beings. But when he added to the powers that control man certain vague and hardly reputable supernatural forces, he was decidedly less successful. The gods are out of the picture in this play, but we can see the jerks they give the action. It is wound up, and runs down towards disaster. Maurice's daughter dies suddenly a few hours after he has said farewell to her. The mother was absent, since he and Henrietta, his mistress, had planned to escape without seeing her. Maurice is accused of murder, his own plans making the accusation possible. Henrietta cannot explain the talk of crime overheard between them, because it would give away her own secret. At the height of Maurice's artistic triumph, he is flung down to the depths. And the detectives' sudden charge forces Henrietta to realise that she is nothing more than a prostitute. The two sink into distrust of all, and of each other: yet they feel impelled to marry. The lines of disaster are drawn together with some skill, but they are puppets who dance at the end of them.

Strindberg's changed philosophy is not altogether unproductive even in this play. True that the element of chance and mystery has weakened the force of the characters and made their rise and fall a mechanical arrangement. But on the other hand there is dramatic value in Adolph's words—'There are crimes not mentioned in the criminal code, and these are the worst ones, for they have to be punished by ourselves, and no judge could be more severe than we are against ourselves.' This makes the play more than a mere story of human folly and crime, of passing interest. The sense of fatality is sometimes convincing, though not sufficiently so to reconcile us to the blindness of the action, and consequent weakness of character. The repetition of the idea that a will to kill may actually kill another person recalls too vividly the persecution-mania of the *Inferno*. Adolph killed his father by his fatal desire: Henrietta's mother killed her husband; Maurice his child, by a chance word. The play ends in a sane readjustment. Maurice has been punished—by fate?—for sins not in the code. He realises that conscience 'is the horror inspired in our better selves by the misdeeds of our lower selves.' To-night he will go to church; to-morrow to the theatre. It is likely that you will ask whether a moral lesson to this weak-willed egoist is worth the insistent idea of doom, the death of his daughter, indeed the whole intricate action. Console yourselves: there is no Maurice nor Marion, his daughter, nor Henrietta his mistress, nor Adolph his friend—Strindberg invented them all to furnish out his show.

An element of fantasy was always present in Strindberg's work. During this time he developed it with as much success as was possible to him. It appears in *Easter* and the better symbolic plays; and in the *Dream Play* in more uncompromising fashion. There is always a certain gloom about Strindberg's fantasy, even a little heaviness. The reality and earnestness of life were too near him. True fantasy captures the soul of laughter for its weaving. And Strindberg never laughs. Add to this the burden of his belief in the infernal nature of life on earth, and it seems likely that the *Dream Play* will be somewhat dreary. That it is not is because it contains scenes as good as his finest realist dramas, an insight fully as deep. But the reality drags on the fantasy; the fantasy disorders the reality, and the whole is spoilt because it is not fantastical enough. It is a fine failure. It depends for its full effect on an arbitrary scene-shifting which substitutes stage mechanism for artistic construction. Moreover, if the dramatist must dream he should at least do so thoroughly. To the dream-consciousness the logic of imagined actions is unshakable. However fantastic the events of a dream they appear natural and inevitable. In the *Dream Play* Strindberg has reproduced their absurdity, and failed entirely to suggest their inevitable sequence. They are only episodes strung together by a series of mechanical stage settings. And, faith, they are sorrowful episodes! They have at least one connecting idea, the misery of being. Only through sorrow can the sin of existence be expiated. Love itself is supreme joy in conflict with supreme pain. There is no hope: when the door of Truth is opened, there is nothing behind it. The whole world is a dream, the poet's dream of truth. Save in his vision there is neither order nor beauty. Before the consciousness of the dreamer pass all the sorrows of the world: the wretchedness of marriage, the follies of learned and 'right-minded,' the unspeakable hell of the worker, the sordid misery of crime, the inevitable soiling of all love and the pitiful retracing of past experience. Vivid characters there are: the Officer, wronged as a child, wronging others; prisoner in the castle of his fear of life; seeking the love given to another, his life a wretched reminiscence of the past. There is the Lawyer, stained with the sins of other people, chafing in an unhappy marriage, and held by his child and the memories of his love; the Poet guessing in vision at the truth his reason reviles; and the Daughter who is the dreamer suffering all these things in herself.

Episodes have all the old power: the arrival of He and She at Foulstrand is a terrible warning to the degraded sentimentalist and the creatures who write up sexual love. The Daughter and the Lawyer quarrel and hate each other in their forced intimacy, and Christine covers over beauty and pain and hope of freedom with her eternal—'I paste, I paste.' The end of it is that all life is vain repetition and misery. 'Men are to be pitied.' There are terrible pictures and snatches of speech with the force and truth of Strindberg's finest work. But in the whole play is a failing of technical skill, and a total lack of illusion. We believe in it neither as dream nor as reality. Had constructive subtlety made it a credible whole it would have depressed without uplifting us, a pessimistic drama which is the negation of dramatic art. What need have we of an artist who is as weak as ourselves, and can give us nothing more than the pain we see for ourselves? *The Dream Play* is sad, but it is not tragic. A doctrine of resignation never created tragedy: tragedy deals with terrible things and the defeat of strength. But here is only weakness, not strength; depression, not terror. Away with these pessimistic thieves of life, beggared of vitality! The drama of to-day needs all they cannot give: laughter and the inspiration of the fight.

There is one difference between Strindberg and the average trader in sorrowful plays. Strindberg is sincere.

These are the weak points of this latest drama: pessimism, and a symbolism of thorns crackling under a pot. But Strindberg's new detachment of vision had dramatic possibilities beyond the reach of his earlier work, limited as it was by a materialist philosophy and a passion for truth in the narrower sense. These possibilities he fulfilled in the first part of *The Dance of Death.* In this play Naturalism in drama touched its highest point. Strindberg himself has written nothing to surpass it, nor his followers anything to approach it. It is worth comparing his methods with the work of the realist who gave modern drama its next and most powerful impulse. Ibsen and Strindberg are the culminating points of the two great phases in modern dramatic realism. Ibsen deals with high human aspirations expressed through everyday people; Strindberg with great passions and exceptional people. In Ibsen's finest plays the action moves towards the revelation of truth through its comprehension in the souls of men and women. The interest is in the effect on a soul of self-realisation. Strindberg presents us episodes of such a nature that from them the whole life and value of his characters are made clear. They move through his drama greater and more real than they were in life. Through them is revealed a century of human misery and human desire. They are greater than men, because only so can the dramatist show man so great as he is. When Strindberg draws the average man his plays are commonplace, and their interest ephemeral. When Ibsen draws the average man he is a crystal surrounding the flame of truth. But Strindberg's great dramas are not of the average man. They are of men and women who in themselves typify eternal passions, eternal phases of humanity. So in *The Dance of Death.*

In this drama more than in any other, the characters seem more than natural. There are only three of importance, the Captain, Alice his wife, and Curt, her cousin. They move in the darkness like colossal emblems of evil and suffering: a lying, self-willed nature, bound to one more cunning and evil, and another held to them both by alternate passion and weakness. There is not in modern literature a like picture of the misery that two people may force upon each other. The sin and suffering they bear is not theirs only, but borne in countless tortured lives. Here is a man, whose qualities of pride, selfishness, and desire for power make his life and his wife's life such that the island on which they live is called 'Little Hell.' Yet all his evil tendencies are the other side of usefulness and strength. He might have been as great as he is now maimed and wasted. As a young man, he worked hard, and starved himself to feed and clothe many brothers and sisters. Now he and his wife live alone, shunned by all. His petty tyranny over inferiors has ruined his chance of becoming Major. His daughter Judith he has trained in his image that she may torture her mother. A diabolical itch to interfere with the lives of others possesses him. He had Curt's children taken from him at his divorce, and he now arranges to bring Curt's son to the island. There, as a cadet, the boy will be under his guidance, and Curt must watch his son slowly slipping from him. 'That is just his vampire nature, to interfere with other people's destinies, to seek interest out of other's existences, to regulate and arrange the doings of others.' Why has he become thus self-tormented, and tormentor of others? The drama is itself that very question, and the answer, could we realise it, would be an answer to the whole problem of evil and sin. Either a man's own nature or a power greater than his, or both, drive him in life to make himself his own fate, his hell, his punishment. Are his sins forced upon him by his nature? Are they crime or punishment? The Captain is sufferer and scourge in one: the peace that his death brings is not only for the wife who hated him, but for his own hunted soul. That Strindberg should solve the complicated problem of evil is impossible: that he has suggested even half an answer is the greatness of his drama.

On its technical side, the *Dance of Death* is the finest of his plays. His use of dialogue is here at its surest and most subtle. Its quality is perfect naturalness, to which a perfection of arrangement and a classic restraint give the distinction essential to tragedy. The common language of everyday life is not the language of tragedy: nor is that same common language bedizened out of all semblance to natural speech. Would the gods might strike that to the hearts of writers of our Tragedies of Nan. Tragedy is a matter of great souls, and great souls speak as befits them. Here are no unnecessary words, nor a single forced phrase, but the speech of the three is lifted above the level of the market-place and kept there. By its power of suggestion we see the house where two children 'perished merely for lack of light.' Curt has not been in it a few minutes before he says—'There are dead bodies beneath the flooring, and the place is so filled with hatred that one can hardly breathe.' In the coolest tones and words the tragedy of their life reveals itself. Alice tries to talk to the cousin she has not seen for many years. 'What am I to talk about? That I have spent a lifetime in this tower, locked up, guarded by a man I have always hated, and whom I now hate so beyond all bounds that the day he died I should be laughing until the air shook. . . . Once we were separated—within the same house—for five whole years.' As in all the other plays the love of sex is brother to the most relentless hate. In all such love there must be times when it turns to dislike, but not to the restless, unreasoning hatred of Strindberg's plays. But his are exceptional people, who hate or love to excess. And since love to excess does not last long, it must become either utter indifference or thorough hatred. Shut two such people up together for a life time, and the chances are strong that it is hatred. When the Captain falls senseless, his wife's first thought is a savage hope that he is dead. Utterly alone, his loneliness the work of his own hand and nature, he waits for death, with only Curt's hopeless scepticism for support. 'Is this annihilation then?' he asks. And Curt replies—'The beginning of it.' 'Good-night'—'Good-night.'

He does not die yet, and Curt slowly realises the perverted strength of his character. Amid the lies; intrigues and weakness of Curt and his wife, he becomes more lonely, more self-assured, and more diabolically malignant. His strength lies partly in his power of believing only what he chooses to believe. Though he himself separated Curt from his children, he believes that Curt abandoned them. His colossal conceit is very like heroism. 'I am, therefore God is,' he says, facing death easily. He risks his life by refusing leave of absence, and stands in the wind on the ramparts to prove his superiority. The horror of his life is almost intolerable in its reality. Alice taunts him as he lies, apparently near death, letting him realise how she loathes him and longs for his death. Yet it is she who says—'He is to be pitied—for being what he is.' Torturer or tortured? We do not know, and as the drama passes, realise that we dare not know.

All who live in the atmosphere of the house are evil. 'It is as if these prison walls had absorbed all the corruption of the criminals and it gets into you if you merely breathe the air.' Curt, too weak to be either malignant or revengeful, is dragged into the corruption. The Captain tells them that the doctor has declared him dying; and further that he has filed a petition for divorce. Alice is given ten minutes to leave the house. Curt must save his son, and together they plan to ruin the Captain by exposing his theft of stores, a theft that only exists in her twisted imagination. In an ecstasy of hope Alice cries wildly of freedom, and Curt, intoxicated, 'seizes her in his arms and bites her throat.' They attract and repel each other, the woman rejoicing in her husband's misery, and the man in whom she has roused a beast. But the Captain's fate is not accomplished : he has a second seizure and with consummate malignity confesses to Curt that he has lied. The doctor did not say that he would die; he never applied for the divorce, nor did he send for Curt's son. His words suggest a half of the truth. 'Life seemed so peculiar—so contrary, so malignant—ever since my childhood—and people seemed so bad that I grew bad also.' Whether he be sincere or not, his words are chosen with the cunning of a devil. Curt's resentment collapses, he pushes Alice away, and leaves them both. Despair seizes her : her gaoler is not dying; Curt has forsaken her, and she must face the Captain's anger when the telegraph clicks out an answer to the story of his theft. With the generosity of a god or a devil he refuses to listen to the telegraph. Then —'Yes, I know you wanted to put me in prison, but I wipe it out. I suppose you have done worse than that.' Now, by his magnanimity she is chained to him for ever. The dreary treadmill begins again with the very words of the Captain in his moment of generosity and cunning triumph. Here ends the first part, wherein from the burden of sin the gods weave the web of life. In its sculptural power alone, it is the greatest of Strindberg's works, as great as anything in modern drama, greater than any other modern drama of realism.

The second part of the play is weak. There are more characters. A stupid, sentimental Lieutenant, Allan, Curt's son, and Judith, whose likeness to her father is not ill-suggested. The expectation of the Captain's vengeance and Alice's incessant talk of his villainy are wearisome. Even the illusion of reality is lost when Alice translates the Captain's words for Curt as the three converse. The characters have sunk to the level of ordinary criminals and fools. The Captain has ruined Curt, financially and socially. He succeeds in every plan, until Judith's love for Allan breaks her. She turns on her father and ruins his plans for social advancement. For a moment the horror of the first play returns, when Alice mocks him as he sits half-unconscious. He dies, and his death re-creates the dual problem that made the play. 'Forgive them for they know not what they do,' he said, and it is as if another voice spoke through Alice—'Peace be with him.'

This second part is as vastly inferior to the other as a comedy of intrigue can be to the tragedy of a soul. Any depth it has it takes from the first part. In itself it is unconvincing and paltry; the intrigues of an old man who is defeated by his daughter and dies.

The *Dance of Death* is by no means the last play of this third phase of Strindberg's drama, but it is certainly the greatest. And here it is fitting to end. Strindberg will never be anything but a lone figure in the drama. His strength and his weakness are alike too pronounced to allow him the comfortable oblivion of mediocrity. He is a great dramatist, but all his dramas are not great. Where he is right he is more gloriously so than any other modern dramatist: where he is wrong he sinks to bathos and puerility unutterable. His technique is as uncertain as his spiritual power. At its weakest, it harks back to the French society drama, or descends to the feebleness of the average naturalist. At its best, it shows an unsurpassed power of concentration, both in action and dialogue. Even at its finest his work is one-sided. There are other things in life than misery and struggle, and the only refuge from them is not a mystical self-deception. Too often we are conscious of a vision distorted by personal misery. Strindberg's life and work are inseparably bound together. The isolation and dislike of his childhood, the bitter poverty of his early life, feminist attacks, unhappy marriage, the mental crisis in Paris, are all reflected in his writing. He is thoroughly in earnest; and life, to be tolerable, must sometimes be taken as a jest or a trifle. When he was eight years old, he thought of taking his own life, because his word was doubted. This may be noble, but it is certainly near the ludicrous. So throughout his drama, only its passion of conviction saves it at times from aggravated failure. Where the power of his personality recedes from it, where he borrows life and people as pegs for thesis or plot, he becomes at once strained or merely stupid. This same one-sided view of life lays his drama open to its second weakness, an unshakable pessimism. Art must make life better than it is: Strindberg makes it worse. But at the same time he makes it greater, and herein is the saving quality that allows his darkest drama to be his finest. If he believed that life is without hope, at least he did not, save in times of weakness, pray for effortless ease. Even when he speaks of the duty of resignation, he does not create in his plays characters who desire nothing better than self-satisfaction. He cannot see the laughter in life, but he sees man's perpetual self-deceit. At times his sudden revelation of the inward meaning and value of actions and words is intolerably startling. No man likes to see himself without the rags behind which his soul hides from itself. Hence Strindberg must remain the dramatist of a few. He has created some figures who are as great in their misery and unconquerable rebellion as any creation of any drama. Let that be his atonement for whatever in his work is mediocre and exaggerated.

The end of the first phase in the dominant drama

Strindberg's drama is the summit of the naturalist movement. Behind him and the French pioneers of the movement, and the subtly different contribution of the Russians come the charlatans and the camp followers. Of them more later. It is sufficient now to point out that the decay of Naturalism was as inevitable as it has been complete. The creed of the naturalists was a dangerous one, and thoroughly inartistic. Their ideal was itself a sign of weakness. The imitation of life, neither falsified nor exaggerated, may produce excellent records for the historian or the scientist, but in art it is nothing more nor less than evidence of incompetence. Mere imitation is in drama what the work of the pavement artist is in painting. It implies a dramatist's complete reliance on external stimulus. He has no power save that of arranging, more or less badly, the everyday thoughts and deeds of everyday folk. The naturalist disdained even arrangement, and attempted to present life with scientific faithfulness. The first result is a total lack of restraint; the sense of rhythm fails completely, and the result is a chaotic medley of worthless facts.

Without the desire, probably without the capacity for observing any laws of form, these playwrights rely on the effect of ugly or painful records, and on nothing more. With no power worth restraining, they abandon restraint; letting their puerility and weakness overrun the stage in a thousand stupid 'tragedies,' or meaningless 'social dramas.' No sense of proportion hinders them from believing that neurotic women, weak-willed men, the hundred and one futilities of a stupid sex problem are as fitted for drama as fine souls and great conflicts. 'Art is with us in order that we may not perish thro' truth,' but the average drama of real life takes it to be with us in the capacity of photographer. A consciousness of strength involves a desire to put it to the severest test. Hence the greatest art has wrestled with the severest and most exacting form, its power becoming visible within sharply defined lines. But where, as in the drama of the naturalists, form is rejected, it is because there is no power that could survive the struggle with a rigid restraint. Or, as in the greatest romantic drama, it is because although creative strength is present, the classic vision of form has faded from the world.

In the chaos of Naturalism exaggerated feelings are a cult, and emotional exhaustion expresses itself in hysterical passion. In every form of decadence there is the constant effort to feel and act with a delirious lack of self-control. Hence the drama of the naturalists ended in disorder, which is the death of art. An artistic treatment of life involves a vision of it wherein all disconnected facts become parts of one significant whole: the naturalists were content with a copy of its facts. The first impulse of the artist is his need to interpret life. It is there even before he learns to master the means for its accomplishment; glory of colour, beauty of form. Life is his to re-create, not to steal for a puppet-show. And drama is not a collection of facts to be recorded by simian workers in dramatic truth. If the world has grown ugly, it is the fault of the realist who has robbed us of the soul wherewith we invested it, and given us the drab falsehoods he calls reality. Reality does not lie in a catalogue of facts, but in giving them meaning and order: life is a spiritual possession, and art exists in order that the human spirit may seize its heritage. Hence the great dramatist is not a slave copying life, but a man in authority, interpreting it, making it simpler and more noble than it is, insisting upon essentials.

Björnsterne Björnson

Admirable as a revolt against the inanity and estrangement from life of Scribe and Dumas, the naturalist drama is even as far from life. Nor does its failure depend on its insistence on the lower and more brutal side of existence. There is a dramatist contemporary with Ibsen and Strindberg, whose work is influenced neither by the new depth and power of Ibsen nor by the crudity and harshness of the naturalist. Its ideal is nearer to the latter than to the ideal of Ibsen's work. It presents the facts of life, at first with many backward glances at France and Dumas; and it presents them with the sanity and cheerfulness of the average man, who believes that all must ultimately be well with a world where the middle-classes are so fine and so intelligent. It is in fact Naturalism without the slum, the pathology and the horrors. Björnson possesses, indeed, some qualities markedly different from those that distinguish the naturalist. The very writing of such a play as *Mary, Queen of Scots*, is part proof of this, though the play is somewhat noisy, and Mary's charm, much spoken of, is little realised. So also is *Sigurd Slembe*. It is not a drama, in spite of some dramatic power in the love of Sigurd and

Andhild; in the peace that is death's gift to Sigurd; in the character of Frakark, the Valkyrie type of northern mythology. It is almost a national epic, with dreary wastes and with a little force and beauty.

But neither Björnson's sanity nor his optimism save his drama from the fate of the naturalist. There are three plays by which he is known in England. There is first a crude, badly-constructed story of a newly-married couple: the wife is rather silly, and the husband rather stupid. The characters are not created: they describe themselves. A lurking humour alone saves it from the lower depths of sentimentality. Then there is *Leonarda*—certainly a better play. The grandmother, with her old-fashioned morality, so curiously like the new, is actually a distinctive personality. But there is no depth of thought, either in Leonarda, though it is suggested that she has nobility of character, or in the exalted Hagbart, whose changeful affections are related, but never realised.

A Gauntlet is typical of the passing interest of an average social drama. It treats of the dual standard of morality for men and women, a problem still aggressive. But its present interest is slight, notwithstanding its attempt to present both sides of the question. Stress is laid on the least important aspect of the case, its relation to a shifting convention, rather than its value for life. The characters are superficial and weak. Svava has the selfishness as well as the bigotry of youth: the sinner himself is shadowy. The dialogue lacks both distinction and force; neither in it nor in the presentment of psychological impulses has the dramatist grasped his work. Hence, in spite of his freedom from the mere ugliness of the naturalists, Björnson fails exactly as they do, from an utter incapacity to interpret and transcend life. The very qualities in his work by which it will live witness against their faith, being just those elements that they excluded. One is an imaginative love of beauty that reveals itself in an intense delight in his country. It is in Sigurd's dying speech—'In my wanderings I saw thy mountains in every sky'; and throughout *Pastor Sang*—'There is something in nature here that calls out the abnormal in men also. Here nature herself is beyond all ordinary bounds. We have night almost the whole winter. We have day almost the whole summer and then the sun above the horizon both day and night . . . and its effects of colour on the sky and the mountains and the sea. From the deepest, glowing crimson, to the softest most delicate golden white.—Naturally the people's ideas are in harmony. They are boundless.'

There is one of his plays that points for ever the moral of the naturalist defeat. It is the only drama of Björnson free from the weakness and transitory interest which condition that defeat. *Pastor Sang* is the drama of an unearthly power. The spirit of the north surrounds it from the first picture of the scene in which it moves. 'A black wind blew up the fiord behind us. We were right under a high, bare, gray fell. A flock of sea-mews flew out; a pair of them shrieked over our heads. It was so cold. Some poor cottages on the beach.' The supreme faith of Pastor Sang is a destroying fire. Klara, his wife, not of his faith, resisted it, at first almost involuntarily, then consciously. She has struggled without ceasing against what she feels the terrible nature of his transcendence of reality. 'When such a storm is raging that the most experienced seaman will not go out in a ship, to say nothing of the pastor's long-boat, then he will start off in a little four-oar—perhaps with a little child in the stern!' Her resistance has broken her; for years she has lain unable to move, her spirit still opposing itself to his in instinctive terror, though her love and reverence for him are absolute. Even as Brand's, this man's supreme idealism threatens pain for all whom it touches. But Brand has not the understanding and humanity of Pastor Sang. 'You have sacrificed yourself inch by inch,' he says to his wife. 'Not from faith, not from hope of reward, here or hereafter, but from love alone. How I love you!' His children, too, have broken down. When they must pray with him for Klara, they cannot. In their search for truth, they saw 'only one Christian,' their father. All the rest take only a little part of their faith, or, trying to understand and live the whole, strain themselves. The idea of strain is continually present. Sang's faith is inspired by a power greater than himself: sooner or later its strength must shatter even his great soul. With the failure of his children, he rises to the highest test. He tells them that faith is to know that to faith all is possible. He himself stumbled over the impossible: his faith and power have never saved his wife, though they have wrought miracles of healing in the whole countryside. He will save her; and as he rings the bell in his church, praying, she sleeps. An avalanche rushes down upon the church and turns aside just above it. It is another miracle, and Klara is not wakened.

While he prays in the church the people gather round it, waiting for the greatest miracle. Throughout the scene, the sense of suspense deepens. Realisation comes suddenly to Rakel, his daughter. The power that inspires him is more than human, and if it succeeds in this last terrible test, must kill both man and wife. Meanwhile, a conference of clergymen meets in the little house, to discuss his miracles, and while they sit discoursing of high things Rakel comes in. Klara has risen, 'but she is not alone.'

In the church, the Pastor knows that his prayer is answered, comes, and holds her in his arms, and the singing of the people surges round the house. Then she dies, and even as he realises that this is the sharpest height of faith, he dies with her. The power in them has killed them both, mightier than the mightiest human soul. This is Björnson's only great drama.

With the last years of the century, the first phase in the dramatic movement to realism had passed. In spite of the isolated triumph of *Pastor Sang*, and of Strindberg's tragic genius, the whole movement must have ended either in the weakness of a drama of pain and crime, or at its best never risen above a mediocre realism, witty and grave. But a second and greater dramatic impulse was at hand. The playing of *Ghosts* in Paris in 1887, in Berlin in 1889, and in London two years later, marked the beginning of another phase in the movement, and the revelation of a realist drama of far wider possibilities than the earlier phase could offer. In this later drama of realism Ibsen holds the place that Strindberg does in the earlier. He saved the movement from chaos and death, and left it a series of plays that none of his followers have equalled, nor will ever equal, since already the drama is turning from the lines he laid down for it.

CHAPTER II

IBSEN

THE disintegration in the forces of the new movement had already begun before Ibsen's drama established itself on the northern stage. The playwrights of the tribe called naturalist had stirred Europe, and themselves were losing strength and cohesion. Three things were necessary to the new drama, if it were to justify itself before the changes in its own age and the spirit of the age to come. Much might have been learned from Strindberg, but he was then, as now, the dramatist of a few. Moreover, the quality of his genius made him master of tools that turn and slip in the hands of lesser craftsmen. He left no constructive model that would serve for another man's idea, being, by the grace of God, a creator of distinctive types. Hence realism in the drama, having abandoned the technical trickery of the French society plays, was finding itself innocent of all technical skill, and at the same time in danger of becoming a dramatic museum of observed facts and imitation people. It needed constructive power : it needed a more productive idea of character, as being more than habits and a plausible begging of the question called 'motive.' Further, with a deeper insight into character a more subtle idea of action necessarily follows : from the external action of a drama concerned with 'facts of life' it passes to the spiritual progress of human beings. Development along some such lines was essential to the realist drama. And in Ibsen's finest work, all three lines of development, in construction, in character and in action, were fully realised.

TECHNIQUE

The first period

Up to a certain point his work advances to its greatest power. Later, while developing in certain directions, it loses ground in others. His dramatic progress is quite definite. In technique, his first masters were the French writers of society drama, Scribe and the younger Dumas. *Lady Inger of Ostrat* is, in construction, a crude and clumsy imitation of their methods; their intricate plot, incredible soliloquy and aside, and their theatrical trickery. With this, Ibsen mingled the worst elements of the sentimental romantic tragedy, screams of horror, vaults, and exalted ravings. Thus the play opens with those servants who must for ever be talking of the affairs of the house. Almost immediately comes the black figure of romance, moaning her remorse along the dark corridors. The better touch in the play is Eline's love for Nils Lykke, and her half-conscious surrender behind a somewhat exaggerated pride. As a whole, the play is made up of an intrigue incredibly stupid, that misplaces the usual letters, and confuses loyalist and traitor by refraining at whatever cost to naturalness from the words that would set everything right. So ill did Lady Inger arrange her plot that the consequent death of her son and her remaining daughter seems a light penalty.

Later, Ibsen mastered his weapons. *The League of Youth* is a thoroughly 'well-made' play. It is without aside or soliloquy and better constructed than many of its French models. The necessary explanations are accomplished without servants or confidants or an unashamed recital. As always, the plot depends on a misapprehension, here little less improbable than usual. There is sufficient clamour and interest in the action, in Stensgaard's speech to the young men, in Heire's malicious interference. At the end of the first act, the intrigue is well started with a double mistake, the 'local situation' fully sketched, and the characters of the people fixed for the whole play. That is as it should be in these plays. The second act complicates the action by Stensgaard's manœuvres, and ends with the excitement of his first blunder. Later comes the social discussion that we expect, in the dialogue between the Chamberlain and Monsen. Old ruling class and new quarrel over their services to society, and on the whole the discussion is more interesting and more real than was usual in the *drame sociale.* It is also quite as obvious. So, too, are the scraps of philosophy, as Aslaksen's 'After getting out of your class you can't get into it again.' More of the characters are drawn into the confusion, which the fourth act aggravates. Here there is play with a forged bill, and from this point the action loses in reality what it gains in farcical humour. Stensgaard tries to stand well with three women. By the usual trick of mixed letters and withheld news, he is found out in all his intrigues, and kicked out of the society he worshipped. Everything ends well in a series of betrothals, and Fieldbo is permitted to dispense a little psychology.

The action of the play is altogether external. It is well arranged; the intrigue is worked out with skill. If Heire gives the action an occasional jerk, he does it as subtly as he does his mischief-making. Ibsen has perfected the old frame-work, and fitted it with living people. Stensgaard is well and truly drawn, an intriguer by nature, furiously resentful of slights, ambitious, self-deceiving, full of the cheap psychology of the politician. 'Man is a complex machine,' he says, and adds, 'I am, at any rate.' Few of the characters are without defined personality; and the whole play, compact as the cleverest play of Dumas and Sardou, is infinitely more credible.

The second period

The *League of Youth* is Ibsen's best work in the French manner, and totally unproductive for the future of the drama. After this play his work changes its character and develops towards its finest achievement. Two plays, *Pillars of Society* and *A Doll's House* mark the change from the artifice of external movement to the art of spiritual movement. In *Pillars of Society* the two phases of the action, external event, and spiritual change are not harmonised. But the idea of action as an inward progress is there, half-realised; and a unity of setting and character attempted. The moral atmosphere of the town is suggested at the beginning, in the meeting of the Society for the Moral Regeneration of the Lapsed and Lost. On the one side is Mrs Bernick, an unconscious victim; on the other, Dina, fully conscious of oppression and longing for freedom. The return of Lona and Johan from America disturbs the dust to show how thickly it has lain. Here, as in all subsequent plays, the action is in the past. A new-comer among the Moral Regenerators is told of the sin that sent Johan and Lona to America, and left Dina to be cared for by Bernick, pillar of this provincial society. This first retrospective step is rather clumsy. In Bernick's conversation with Johan and Lona the truth is gathered up: Bernick is the man who ruined Dina's mother and let Johan take the blame. He married Betty for the money he needed, and has used it to make himself so secure that now, without rousing suspicion, he can advocate a railway through land he has secretly bought. But

Lona has come to play the doubtful part of conscience. Just as she is forcing him to remember his lie, his partners demand a public declaration that he has no private interests in the railway. He becomes still further entangled in crime and falsehood. He threatens to dismiss his foreman if the American ship in his yard for repairs is not away in twenty-four hours. In this order he persists, although he knows that the *Indian Girl* is unseaworthy and must go down in the threatened storm. This is the most glaring crudity in the whole play. It was invented to force the catastrophe, with a complete disregard of probability. His reason for wanting the American ship off his hands is that the newspapers are blaming him for keeping her disorderly crew so long in the town. But in a small town whose most important industry was his shipyards, the mere suspicion of sending out a doomed ship would do his reputation infinitely more harm than the drunken riots of the American crew. The incident is unreal and absurd: it destroys the force of the climax.

At the end of the third act his position, social and mental, is at its worst. Bit by bit he lives again through the past. He is irretrievably entangled in the railway scheme: his future depends on its success. Then Johan, in anger at the lies that have been told to Dina, threatens to return again to tell the whole story. But Dina can bear no more regeneration. She prepares to go back with Johan to America, and Bernick is on the verge of letting them sail in the *Indian Girl* to get rid of them. With this, he learns that plans are on the way to honour him publicly for his social efforts. Lona makes her final appeal, and he prepares to receive the honour. To bring him now to self-realisation required the utmost of the dramatist's art. But at this moment in the action Bernick dies, not actually but dramatically. Olaf, his son, has run away in the *Indian Girl*, now out at sea with the storm coming on. Before he hears that Anne and Mrs Bernick have saved Olaf, he is terrified into realising his sin. He confesses publicly, for no adequate reason, so far as the dramatist gives his reasons. True, he has suffered a spiritual struggle, while the past lay before him, a reopened book. True, he has partly realised his fall. But it was the melodramatic incident of the *Indian Girl*, unreal and mechanical, that forced his hand in the end. The *Indian Girl* was sent out unseaworthy that Olaf might hide himself on board, and Bernick be clumsily jerked into confession and regeneration. The whole of the last act is mechanical and incredible. Only a chance averted the catastrophe and ended the play in reconciliation and hope. Throughout the action there are theatrical tricks: the other pillars of society enter always just when they are required to emphasise Bernick's false position. But the attempt has been made to write a drama of spiritual change, wherein the past is slowly retraced until realisation is forced upon the characters, who must either accept and transcend it, or die. Partial failure though it be, *Pillars of Society* is the first step in that dramatic progress which reached the heights of *Ghosts* and *Rosmersholm* before it turned downwards.

Of the finest drama in which action, setting, and character are woven into one unity of spiritual change, *Rosmersholm* is the supreme example. In it page after page is opened into the past, until Johannes Rosmer is left bankrupt of illusion and of faith. Throughout the play, the inevitable pressure of disaster is never lifted. It is not fate only, nor character only, nor circumstance only, that drive Rosmer and Rebecca to die, but something of all three; and the burden of tradition that gives each its power. The gradual unfolding before Rosmer of the truth concerning his love, his powers, his ideals, is perfectly attuned to the slow revelation of his character. And both are in accord with an atmosphere heavy with the thoughts and wishes of the past. Rosmer's spiritual struggle, intimately conceived, *is* the action. The development of the circumstances that condition it are that action's under side. Each external change serves the purpose of spiritual unity; bringing slowly nearer the climax of the tragedy in Rosmer's horrified self-knowledge. Every emotional change is subordinated to the dominant sense of helplessness before tradition and the actions of his past. The whole is in perfect harmony with its setting. This, the dramatic rhythm of action, character, and circumstance, is the height of Ibsen's power, imaginative and constructive.

The atmosphere of the house in which the action passes is suggested at the beginning of the play, and throughout is subtly felt. In the quiet room Rebecca's words are the first warning of tragedy—'They cling to their dead here at Rosmersholm.' Madam Helseth's is the other half of the truth—'Now, *I* would say, Miss, that it's the dead that cling to Rosmersholm.' Since the death of Beata, his wife, Rosmer has lived here with Rebecca West, his wife's companion. Under her influence he has become sceptic and a Radical, breaking with his family tradition. When the test of his new faith comes, it finds him ominously weak; he dare not at first tell Kroll of his change. In common with most converts to Democracy he has the ideals born of ignorance and untried faith. He will create an aristocracy of the people, 'happy noblemen.' 'I am not in love with the spirit that is in the ascendant, nor with either of the contending parties. I will try to bring together men from both sides—as many as I can—and to unite them as closely as possible.' The want of self-control shown by both parties appals him—'Men are growing evil in this struggle.' This, together with his friends' unexpected call for his help against the Radicals, forces him into a publicity he loathes. Fate and circumstance have brought his character before the first bar.

His dead wife stands beside the next. She had gone twice to Kroll, her brother, with words that at the time he had dismissed as signs of her mental state. Now, with the knowledge of Rosmer's apostasy, he sees meaning in her raving. So long as Rosmer remained aristocrat and conservative, Kroll did not think it strange that Rebecca stayed with him after Beata's death. But free-thought and free-love are inseparable in Kroll's mind. Further, he can see now that Rebecca's personality is dominating Rosmer, and he tells him the first of the truths that defeat him. In spite of Rosmer's efforts to deceive her, Beata had known that he was leaving the old faith, in religion as in politics. And through the last tortured months before she flung herself in the mill-race, she had believed him in love with Rebecca. That, and not madness, had caused her suicide. She felt herself guilty in standing in their way, invalid and childless. 'I have not long to live,' she had said, 'for Johannes must marry Rebecca at once.' Above this bitter knowledge, the tradition of his house accuses Rosmer. 'But you have a duty towards the traditions of your race, Rosmer! Remember that! Rosmersholm has, so to speak, radiated morality and order, from time immemorial—yes, and respectful conformity to all that is accepted and sanctioned by the best people. The whole district has taken its stamp from Rosmersholm. It would lead to deplorable, irremediable confusion if it were known that you had broken with what I may call the hereditary idea of the house of Rosmer.' The sense of treachery to his race presses heavily upon Rosmer. And although he knows that Beata's belief in his love for Rebecca had been unjustified, he cannot shake off a sense of guilt.

> ROSMER: Since I have heard all this, she seems, in a ghastly sort of way, to be alive again. . . .
>
> REBECCA: Oh, why brood over troubles no one can solve?
>
> ROSMER: I cannot help it, Rebecca, I cannot shake off the gnawing doubts, however much I may wish to.

He is not strong enough to forget. Morbidly sensitive, he tortures himself with the thought of Beata's sufferings, before she reached 'that heart-breaking accusing victory—in the mill-race.' The second test has found him desperately weak. 'I shall never get over this—wholly. There will always be a doubt—a question left. I can never again know that luxury of soul which makes life so marvellously sweet to live.' Even thus early in the drama it is plain that a nature craving so insistently after luxuries of the soul, even one so valuable as 'peaceful, happy innocence,' has neither much to give to life, nor is able to take much from it.

As he broods over Beata's misery he approaches the third phase of self-knowledge. Rebecca bids him enter into new relations with the outside world, and at the word his mind turns at once to his relations with her. Behind her strength he will hide from the shadow of his dead wife. 'Then she will be out of the saga—completely—for ever and ever.' Like many weak natures, he is in passionate revolt against the pain of effort—'I cannot, I will not go through life with a dead body on my back. Help me to cast it off, Rebecca, and let us stifle all memories in freedom, in joy, in passion.' But Rebecca cannot help him.

The dead woman is too strong for her: the very atmosphere of the house prohibits joy, a house whose children never laughed or cried. And he himself is too weak to bring men the happiness of which he dreamed. In the very moments of inspiration one glimpse of the mill-race suffices to make him confess that human happiness cannot come through him.

He passes swiftly now through his night of the soul. Rebecca's refusal to marry him makes him conscious that he has loved her. Belief in his innocence of Beata's death is completely gone, and he can neither shake off the guilt nor lift it. In the effort to help, Rebecca thrusts him nearer the intolerable truth. She tells him that she tortured Beata to death; but she cannot take away his sense of guilt. Faith in his innocence and in Rebecca both gone, he loses at last faith in his powers. He returns to the side of his friends—'They have made it clear to me that the work of ennobling the minds of men—is not for me.—And besides, it is hopeless in itself. Rebecca—I shall let it alone.'

Still further into the past. He learns of Rebecca's early passionate desire for him, of its slow transformation into the finer love that is content to serve; and last, of her surrender to the Rosmer view of life. With her selfishness has gone her power to order life, her courage, and her will. Now Rosmer is completely broken. He believes neither in her, fearing that in her confession is some secret purpose, nor in himself and the nobility she finds in him.

> REBECCA: Is there nothing in the depths of your own heart that bears witness to the transformation in me, and tells you that it is due to you and you alone?
>
> ROSMER: Oh, Rebecca—I no longer believe in my power of transforming any one. My faith in

> myself is utterly dead. I believe neither in myself nor in you.

The half-mocking, half-bitter philosophy of Ulric Brendel, dreamer of false dreams, spiritual bankrupt, suggests to him the last test. In the presence of the truth, acting for the first time in full consciousness, his counsel is one of weakness and despair. He thinks that if Rebecca 'went Beata's way,' he might regain his faith. To prove that he has ennobled at least one being, she prepares to go. He can live no longer. Strength and joy have slipped from his feeble hands and he will die with her. 'The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband.' Rising to the height of the spiritual climax, the scene mounts to supreme dramatic power, as from the window Madame Helseth watches the mill-race take them in each other's arms. *Rosmersholm* is Ibsen's greatest play. It is not among the greatest tragedies, for the weakness of Rosmer and the slackness of his hold on life lessens its tragic force. But it is with great tragedies, by virtue of the supreme imaginative insight and constructive art that weave it into an organic whole, possessing both power and beauty. It places Ibsen among great artists and dramatists, though in their outer ring.

The third period

After *Rosmersholm* the character of his technique changes. The action is still traced backwards into the past, not, as in the plays of Ibsen's middle period, to force self-realisation upon the characters, but to draw from it or them a truth of vast moment. For this purpose the symbolic nature of action and character is emphasised, to the frequent weakening of dramatic truth and power. So in *John Gabriel Borkman.* The truth to be realised is that sacrifice of our own higher life, and that of others, to any ideal is as much a crime as murder of the body. The action is still mainly retrospective; the truth of the dramatist's doctrine is drawn out of the characters and their life. From a merely technical point of view, the play is faulty; the characters are hardly realised, and the dialogue occasionally forced. It is significant that the clearest of the characters is a minor one, little concerned with the unfolding of the great truth. This is Foldol, the old clerk, with the unpublished tragedy in which he believes, and the real tragedy that he never realises, when the sleigh that carries his daughter out of his life into careless hands runs over his foot. There is no definite line drawn between the technique of these latest plays and of the earlier ones. In each period there are plays that anticipate or recall the methods of the other. One earlier play, *An Enemy of the People,* suggests the later method without its insistence upon symbolic truth. Dr Stockmann passes through a spiritual change. He arrives, not at self-realisation, as do Rosmer and Mrs Alving, but at an understanding of the truth that the majority is always retrogressive and stupid. And this he does, not through an inner change, but forced by external circumstance. He is failed by the local Council, by the Press, and by the townsfolk whom he thought to benefit. Then, and then alone, he appreciates the truth. Without the symbolic nature of the later plays, the action is entirely external, well constructed, and with a dramatic vigour in the clamour of the great meeting.

This play is a didactic social play rather than the study of a spiritual type, of value for all time. It is not raised above the average realist drama by the truth it has to offer: 'The discovery that all our sources of spiritual life are poisoned, and that our whole society rests upon a pestilential basis of falsehood.' Further, that 'The most dangerous foe to truth and freedom in our midst is the compact majority.' And lastly, that 'The minority is always right.' Bold words for Dr Stockmann to use, at that time, and in that place. Constant reiteration has made them the commonplace of the journalist. The play is one more warning that only in so far as it creates great characters, or expresses a truth valuable for life, will a drama be found worthy for the future. Dr Stockmann himself is not impressive. He lectures; he neither inspires, nor is inspired. The only effect of the truth on him is to make him shout and lose his social position. In this play Ibsen has written at least one excellent example of the 'drama of ideas.' It is a reiteration of the oldest of truths, shown not in its effect on the soul of a man, but as affecting his external life. It is not a drama, but an exemplified thesis already losing its interest.

Among the later plays are some that recall the technique of the middle period. They depend, not upon the revelation of an abstract truth, but on the self-realisation that makes the action of *Rosmersholm.* Such a play is *Little Eyolf.* It returns to the earlier technical methods, and adds to them a suggestion of external symbolism. The action is concerned with the spiritual change in the souls of Allmers and Rita, forced by circumstance and by their own nature to realise the selfishness and waste of their life. So again in *Hedda Gabler*, circumstance and her own acts compel Hedda to acknowledge herself bankrupt of hopes and ideals. Here the external action is more insistent than in the great plays.

CHARACTER AND ACTION

With the development of Ibsen's technical power, his conception of character and action changed and deepened, until in their final form he conceived them as concerned before all with inward change, the approach of the soul to a spiritual climax. The characters of his finest drama are always driven to seek freedom for themselves through self-knowledge. When they realise the truth they are for the most part too weak to master it, and die. In Ibsen's drama the truth is always stronger than the men and women who seek it. He has created only two people able to build afresh on the ruins of old faiths and ideals, and they are less successfully realised than weak natures like Rosmer and Solness, who die of the truth. Ibsen is the dramatist of failure through spiritual incapacity. That is why he moves among the immortals not as a brother but as an honoured guest.

The first hint of his drama's later mastery of spiritual action is as early as *The Pretenders*. This play, for the most part, is on the level of the drawing of Hakon. Hakon is neither thoughtful in himself nor the cause of thought in others. He is a stage king, always decisive, always bold. Success and the clash of action are given to him because he is 'the most fortunate man.' But good fortune is not satisfactory as a dramatic motive. He is more than a little shadowy, a little stiff, and somewhat uninteresting. The very 'King's thought' of which he prates is not his, but Ibsen's, who gave it to him. It is part of the carving on a figure head. In the one character, that of Earl Skule, is crowded all the dramatic subtlety that the play possesses. Skule belongs to the old sagas. He has lost the assured simplicity of their heroes, and the new faith in which he would live crushes him.

'To unite——? To unite the Trönders and the men of Viken—all Norway? (Sceptically) 'Tis impossible! Norway's saga tells of no such thing.'

But contempt falls before his fatal half-comprehension—'Whence got you so strange a thought? It runs thro' me like ice and fire.' Standing between two ages and two faiths, he dare not leave either of them. He is 'a king's arm, maybe a king's brain as well,' yet he dare not seize the throne, hesitating always, waiting to be shown by a sign that he is rightfully king. He fears even in his early victory. He fears the power of Hakon's dream, restlessly seeking assurance, asking even the singer at his feast, 'Have you at all times faith that you are a skald?' As Hakon approaches, he dare not act, until he is roused by the love and admiration of his son, just found. Then he is bold enough to take the king's thought for his own. The momentary struggle over, he doubts again. His son's sacrilege terrifies him into confessing that he stole the dream which inspired them. Faith he never had, peace he has destroyed, so he gives himself up to be killed by his enemies. He is well imagined, and at times not ill-executed. Through the shifting changes of theatrical mechanism and action, the soul of a man strives for utterance. Halting, half articulate, here is the Ibsen of the future, seeking in many forms the expression of the human spirit.

Compared with earlier work *The Pretenders* shows a measure of insight into character, and some skill in dramatic presentment of it. Place beside Skule a figure from the great plays and he seems slight and half-realised. Take the character of Rebecca West, and see how slowly and subtly is it unfolded. By degrees we appreciate its strength. Her influence over Rosmer is the first sign. She held the power even when his wife was alive, she it is who inspired his change of mind. That is seen first in her hasty bidding to 'Do it now,' as Rosmer hesitates to tell Kroll of his new faith. She is the inspiration behind his words to Kroll, 'A new summer has blossomed in my soul. I see with eyes grown young again.' And when Kroll comes to open Rosmer's eyes, she listens behind the door, afraid to lose touch with the changes of his spirit. When he cannot shake off a feeling of guilt for his wife's death, imagination finds it easy to conceive the movement of her thoughts round his, seizing at once on the brooding misery she knows dangerous to his happiness and her power. 'Oh, don't speak of Beata! Don't think of Beata any more! You were just beginning to shake off the hold she has on you even in the grave.' But her power is gone; her will, weakened by constant intercourse with Rosmer's nature can no longer order circumstance or hold his mind in her path. Slowly she realises it. She recalls their happy plans to his thoughts, trying to keep him in his imagined strength. Instead, he is turned to the idea of regaining peace and joy in love for her. It is with this, after one moment of wild joy, that she understands the truth. Not only her power over Rosmer is gone, but her power over herself. Later words of hers are the articulate utterance of this first knowledge—'I believe I could have accomplished anything, anything in the world—at that time. For I had still my fearless, freeborn will. I knew no scruples—I stood in awe of no human tie. But then began what has broken my will and cowed me so pitiably for all my days.' After this moment of insight her later acts are the conscious efforts of despair. Unlike Rosmer, who does not know himself until the end, she is henceforth striving in full knowledge of her weakness and his doom. She cannot take his love. Her passion for him has forgotten its origin; desire and will alike are not strong enough to ignore the dead woman. She makes an effort to free him from the past, forgetting that her weakened will can only destroy what strength he has. She will take all the guilt for Beata's death—'Dear friend, you shall have your happy innocence back again.' Her own words weave the threads of their fate. Trying to save him, she destroys him utterly, taking away his faith in her and in his own power for good. To Kroll and Rosmer she tells her story. Her coming to Rosmersholm was part of a plan to use him in the service of her doctrine of emancipation. Then she loved him, and set herself to destroy his invalid wife. She tortured Beata, telling her that Rosmer was working free from his old faith, begging permission to leave the house, with the suggestion that it would be best for all of them. She filled Beata's mind with the thought that as a childless wife she had no right to live, and at the last sent her to death in the mill-race believing that Rebecca must marry Rosmer at once for the sake of an unborn child. Her pride is all that is left to Rebecca in the ruin of her past strength. At the end of her story, her perfect control turns aside Kroll's prying into her conscience, 'Excuse me, Rector Kroll—that is a matter which concerns no one but me. I must settle it for myself.'

In her story she has grown slowly more clear before us, in the passion that drove her beyond pity and the self-control that gave her power to work so long in silence. The two forces, of outward restraint and 'wild, uncontrollable passion', existed together in her nature. She belonged to those women whom sexual passion drives not to loss of restraint but to tireless scheming. The force of their desire is balanced by an intellectual strength that permits them to view the object of their passion with a curious detachment. As desire grows their intellect is stimulated to further intrigue. They lie, and their lies have considerable imaginative value; they plan effects with the ease of an experienced stage manager. With more than the average power of intellect, Rebecca had not the strength to crush her passion, but she could turn her intellect to its service. A man less blind than Rosmer would not have failed to humiliate her by seeing through her schemes. Rosmer was unsuspecting to the verge of imaginative imbecility, and neither helped nor hindered her. This, and the very fierceness of the struggle, brought about its end. The change came, she says, 'little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly—but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached to the depths of my soul.' Rosmer's spiritual refinement prevented any response to her desire. While up to a certain point that would strengthen her passion, in the end it weakened it. Passion died, worn-out and starved. 'All the rest—the horrible sense-intoxicated desire—passed far, far away from me. All the whirling passion settled down into quiet and silence.' Her house was swept and garnished for the devils of weakness. The Rosmer view of life, dependence on tradition and servility to the past, destroyed her strength of will. The struggle had left her utterly weary; what she thought spiritual refinement, mere exhaustion. Affection takes the place of passion, the old self-will turns to as passionate a self-renunciation. She is as immovable in her desperate weakness as in her strength. When Rosmer demands the last test of death, she goes at once to make the sacrifice. It is not only spiritual courage but spiritual weakness that makes her glad to go. 'Why should I remain here in the world, trailing after me my own crippled life? Why brood and brood over the happiness that my past has forfeited for ever?' Rosmersholm has broken her.

Ibsen has no more masterly study than this of Rebecca West, in the slow undermining of her strength, in her courage before the truth, and in the weakness that at the end was powerful enough to kill her and drag Rosmersholm to its fall.

The technical change that developed in the last phase of Ibsen's drama involved a change in his idea of character. He turned from tracing the growth of spiritual self-consciousness to the revelation of an abstract truth. This revelation he accomplished through the characters themselves, who approach thus to the nature of symbols. When their symbolic significance is most insistent, they become shadowy, eluding Ibsen's effort to realise them for drama. At the same time he fell into a certain carelessness of construction; and accentuated it by his occasional reliance on arbitrary symbolism. His mastery of reality fails him and we are left cold by words and deeds that are obviously intended to suggest deep truth. Constructive art and human significance are both weakened by the symbolic nature of these plays. It is not artistically inevitable that they should be weakened. That they are so is Ibsen's failure. The last play he wrote has the faults of this latest work in an exaggerated degree. *When we Dead Awaken* is a technical as well as an artistic failure. His old skill in retrospective action is still there. But the characters are merely symbolic puppets, whom he arranges to present a truth: that life demands not self-sacrifice but that men should live to the utmost of their powers. Throughout the play the words of Irene and Rubek are symbolic to the point of unreality, and that in the drama of a master of realism. Irene cannot talk without dark hints and the suggestion of terrible meaning. Once only she frees herself from the weight of her symbolism, and that is in her contemptuous recognition of the egoism that makes repentance an æsthetic indulgence. At her first coming she speaks of herself as dead. She talks of her children and says—'I have killed them, I tell you—murdered them pitilessly. As soon as ever they came into the world. Oh, long before. One after the other.' She tells him that he killed her soul—'I gave you my young living soul. And that gift left me empty within—soulless. It was that I died of, Arnold.' After this it is disconcerting to find that Rubek's major sin was that he never surrendered to her physical beauty. With the inconsistency of a feminine metaphysician she insists first that he murdered her soul by his self-restraint; then, that although she desired his love, she would have killed him if he had touched her. The artist took her, used her, and let her go. She accuses the man for the artist's selfishness, and herself that she sacrificed her soul on the altar of his art. 'I, too, had a life to live, and a human destiny to fulfil. And all that, look you, I let slip—gave it all up in order to make myself your bondswoman. Oh, it was self-murder. I should have borne children into the world—many children, real children—not such children as are hidden away in grave vaults. That was my vocation. I ought never to have served you—poet.' Never, from beginning to end of the play, is Irene a woman or a type of woman. She is a symbol through which Professor Rubek becomes convinced that the highest ideal in life is to live fully. When at last he is sure that his soul is as dead as hers, they set off up the mountain in an extraordinary ecstasy, and are killed by an avalanche.

Dead they certainly were. Never were so exalted a pair of puppets. Moreover, there is something ludicrous in an elderly professor's outburst of passion, and in the suggestion he makes to his young wife, that they should arrange a domestic triangle. There is no progress in the action, spiritual or other. The people are jerked through it to be the confused expression of a 'truth.' Even Maia's 'freedom' is only the change to another form of slavery. Irene seems at times to be the life of the past rising before Professor Rubek to assure him that he has wasted his life. He does not attain spiritual self-knowledge, but merely a sense of failure, the common result of boredom. Moreover, even if it be true that neither of them have ever lived, their conception of the highest life is somewhat narrow. It is limited by sexual love—'The love that belongs to the life of earth—the beautiful, miraculous earth-life—the inscrutable earth-life that is dead in both of us.' And at the end Rubek can only suggest—'Then let two of us dead—us two—for once live life to its uttermost—before we go down to our graves again.' The final ecstasy is unreal; it is not life, high or low. It is only hysteria—or symbolism.

The great truth in question is somewhat ill-conceived. Irene and Rubek sacrificed their life to his great statue. But, Art, if it be Art, gives a soul to Life, it does not sacrifice life to itself. If Rubek's work were a masterpiece, it was a gift, the expression of his gratitude to the beauty of life. That the ravings of a sexually disappointed woman should impress him with the conviction of a wasted life is a dramatic and artistic downfall. It is ill-said to say that life is greater than art. Life is Art, since Art is the gift to Life of self-realisation.

In spite of this confusion of thought, and its weakness in construction, the play is not quite at the end of Ibsen's downward path from *Rosmersholm* and *Ghosts*. That place is held by *The Lady from the Sea*. In this play a retracing of the past still forms the greater part of the action. It is not ill-done, and the fascination of the sea finely suggested. The truth to be drawn out of character and action is not abstruse. It is that freedom and responsibility are necessary if a choice is to be of any value. There are curious traces of the early technical crudeness. Ellida's—'Pah—how close it is to-day!' and her trembling hand belong to the devices of the amateur playwright. So, too, her extraordinary babbling of a strange man and her child's eyes. The action of the play is concerned with a complicated case of hysteria. Ellida cannot free herself from the fascination of a sailor to whom she was once betrothed. To Wangel, her husband, she says—'I see that the life we two lead with each other is really no marriage at all.' Her justification of the remark is somewhat strained. 'I did not come into your home of my own free-will—that is the thing.' She married him without knowing him, because she wanted a home. That is hardly Wangel's fault. Then she says that she betrothed herself to the fascinating stranger, not knowing him any better than she knew her husband. Yet, strangely enough, she feels more truly married to him than to Wangel. The sailor comes to claim her from her husband, and the interview between the three borders on farce. Ellida's prating of free-will is absurd. 'Of my own free-will, he said! Think of that—he said I should go with him of my own free-will.' If Ellida is hysterical, Wangel is a fool. The Stranger addresses Ellida—'I am going up the fiord in the steamer now; to-morrow night I shall return, and then I will see you again.' Ellida (softly and trembling), 'Oh, do you hear that, Wangel?' And all that Wangel finds to say is—'Do not be alarmed, we shall find means to prevent the visit.'

In the end, after Ellida has given sufficient evidence that she is mentally irresponsible, Wangel leaves her free to choose between himself and the other. A freedom of will, which she could not before use to shake off her fear of the Stranger, now transforms her. She chooses Wangel. Nothing is achieved by the play, nothing created. The doctrine of free will requires a nobler expression than through an hysterical, illogical and will-less female.

In other plays of this time a doubtful symbolism has not penetrated so far into their spirit: it is rather imposed upon the characters. As a consequence they are more humanly significant. *The Master Builder* is such a drama. It suggests a curious comparison with a play so different in method and effect as Strindberg's *Miss Julia*. Both plays deal with the eternal cycle of Dionysian life, death, and re-creation. Strindberg proceeds by a dissection of the mind and soul of his man and woman, pitiless, supremely skilful. Ibsen prefers to suggest the weakness of the dying spirit through characters that are at times more symbolic than typically human. Solness is a dying force, and as such lives by sucking the life from all round him. The attempt to give him fresh vitality destroys him utterly. 'Only where there are graves are there resurrections.' You cannot create afresh from mere weakness. Through Hilda, the spirit of his youth pushes him on his death. And in his heart he is glad to die, as are all who recognise both their own uselessness and the beauty of the new life.

> 'SOLNESS: You are the younger generation, Hilda.
> HILDA: That younger generation that you are so afraid of?
> SOLNESS (nods slowly): And which, in my heart, I yearn towards so deeply.'

The symbolism is two-fold. The power that was given him to build churches he turned to build homes for the people. For that he has had to pay with his own and Aline's home. Now when he would live again in the building of castles, his power is gone and he dies. The second meaning is emphasised at the expense of dramatic vitality. It was the power of Solness's wish that destroyed Aline's home and happiness, as surely as if the cracks in the chimney had been the actual cause of the fire. This is not made convincing, but it is responsible for a masterly study of Aline's crippled life.

Both in technical skill and dramatic truth, *The Master Builder* is a finer play than those in which the symbolic meaning has been too much for Ibsen's sense of dramatic fitness. The partial failure of the latter is not necessarily the fault of the meaning in them, often deeply significant, but of Ibsen's inability to subdue it to dramatic form. The attempt is greater, the success less, even in the best of them. After *Rosmersholm* his work fails steadily: his grasp of character and action is less sure. In the pursuit of abstract truth, he not only fails to be a greater philosopher but becomes a poorer dramatist.

The expected criticism

The name of Ibsen is connected with various scraps of philosophy, sociology and psychology, that have become the cant phrases of a numerous following. Of those whom he helped the most clamorous are the feminists. Nora Helmer is to-day a little forgotten by them. But it is round claims made in *The Doll's House* that their fight continues. Nora herself is a somewhat shaky peg on which to hang a feminine revolt. She has the feminist's one-sided outlook, claiming all and giving nothing. She blames Helmer for thinking first of himself in his failure to take her crime on his shoulders. Yet of herself she asserts that the first duty is to self. She cannot tolerate his treatment of her as a child, but her whole conduct since her marriage has justified such treatment. She committed a crime to save Helmer's life, but she did not consider it criminal, taking easily what seemed to her a natural method of getting money. Even in the first resentment at realising how lightly he has held her, she might have reflected that all these years he has cared for her with all the thought of which he was capable, and with all the consideration that she was able to appreciate. Moreover, he could hardly be expected to believe in the reality of her spiritual change, which is indeed too sudden to be dramatically credible. For he knew nothing of her secret toil to pay back the debt. And she has never been very trustworthy. She lies about the macaroons, and is intensely excitable. The wild dancing to save herself from thinking is not the act of a balanced mind. Nor is her boasting to Krogstad that her influence over her husband has given Mrs Lindau a place in the bank. As a study, she lacks dramatic consistency. Her claim at the end for an acknowledgment of equal responsibility accords ill with the earlier view of her: characters are not re-made in an hour. In the matter of the forged signature she has shown that her idea of honour is a purely personal one. It seemed natural to forge her father's name when it was to save her husband's life. Of abstract justice she has no conception; told that the law against forgery cannot take account of motives, she replies instantly—'Then it must be a very bad law.' She has given little or no cause to regard her as possessed of an independent intellect, or even of spiritual discernment. When she intends to borrow money from Dr Rank she makes use of sexual attraction, and does so instinctively. He rouses her to consciousness of the fact, and she is disgusted—with him. Just as instinctively indirect and feminine is her protection of herself from Helmer's sexual desire by suggesting the thought of Dr Rank's death. Of personal charm and sweetness she has much, but throughout the play she does little to justify her final claim. Judging Helmer very harshly, she demands to be judged by no code but her own. Very like the average feminist!

But the dramatic success or failure of Nora seems of little moment beside the philosophic and social outrages committed in the name of her revolt. Ibsen accepts the impulse towards freedom as her justification for turning her back on her children—posterity. Given the capacity for freedom, and further, the wherewithal to make return for it, the impulse becomes itself duty and privilege. If Nora be taken as a type of the human spirit striving towards freedom, Ibsen had yet to show that he recognised the difference between those who have power to requite the privilege of freedom and those who must continually be re-endowed with it, or its semblance. That he has not done so is his failure both as philosopher and dramatist. Better the fierce unreason of Strindberg's hatred than this short-sighted benevolence. The capacity and effort for freedom can survive criticism and draw strength from opposition. A biased and uncritical friendship will ultimately entrap it in weakness and disintegration.

It is fairly clear that Ibsen intended Nora to be judged not as a type of humanity but from the narrower view of the woman's movement. As a dramatic figure she is unsatisfactory: as a type of rebellious womanhood she is no less so. Disentangle her from the Nora who demanded so much from Helmer and gave him intolerance in return. Call her the woman-type who insists as her right on a wider life. If it seem to you that the future of the race is endangered by her demand, you condemn Nora and the type in her. If on the other hand you see her impulse to freedom as necessary and good, you approve her action as typical and symbolic. But the 'freedom' to which Nora goes, and feminine hosts after her, is a doubtful freedom, and its dramatic worth suffers thereby. It is a contradiction in terms to demand freedom for woman and at the same time send her to find it in the world of industry. There is in the industrial system but the slightest measure of what freedom is possible to man in society. Even the spiritual need that drove woman out remains unsatisfied, when she has put herself in a position whence she must again be set free from the weight of the modern industrial order. Revolting dolls and 'free' women enslaved by industrialism are alike useless to life. But let the Noras go free. At least they may learn, if they are capable of the lesson, the meaning of freedom and its great cost. And let us understand clearly that woman is no slave to man, but, like him, enslaved by a system that on the whole has benefited her. By no means preach self-sacrifice to her, but refrain from exalting her as a martyr to masculine selfishness. She is not; she is with man, crippled and constrained.

Ibsen shares with the dramatists of his time a preoccupation with the doctrine of heredity. In his drama it is connected with an insistence on moral responsibility and duty to the future that lifts it above mere fatalism and pessimism. Nevertheless it was a doctrine that lay heavily on him. The weight of heredity in his tragedies weakens their dramatic value, while it adds to a sense of the inevitable that has encouraged comparison with Greek tragedy. But the fate of the classic drama was a vastly different thing from this fate of the hospital and the medical treatise. It was bound up with the Grecian attitude to the deepest emotions and faiths of humanity, and its peculiar value and power can never be reproduced in another age. The fatality of the Ibsen tragedy belongs to the scientific tyranny of the mid-nineteenth century. The catastrophe of his drama is not the inevitable result of a man's nature, nor of the deeds of that nature, nor of powers beyond man. It is helped on by an insistence on a doctrine of heredity that as scientific fact is discredited, and as drama lessens the value of the character and the force of the tragic action. Hence in *Rosmersholm* the terror of the final scene is lessened because Rosmer is a weak slave to inherited tradition, and his death not so much the end of a great struggle as the crumbling into dust of a thing rotten at the heart. Decay may be pitiful; but only a great defeat is tragic and triumphant.

Ibsen insists on the hereditary transmission of disease, or of moral qualities, without scientific justification and often without any dramatic warrant. It is an obsession, and the instances are without number. So in the *Wild Duck* Hedwig's blindness is suggested as proving her parentage. Gregers speaks of a cure for his sick conscience. And Werle replies—'It will never be sound. Your conscience has been sickly from childhood. That is a legacy from your mother.' In *Rosmersholm* Kroll lays the blame for Rebecca's nature on her mother's sin. *The Doll's House* is full of instances of Ibsen's preoccupation with such shaky doctrines. Helmer tells Nora that 'nearly all cases of early corruption may be traced to lying mothers,' and later says—'All your father's want of principle you have inherited—no religion, no morality.' Popular science is responsible for Dr Rank's extraordinary self-diagnosis, from the result of which he is able to predict the time of his death.

These are small matters. The greater evil of Ibsen's submission to the spirit of his age is in its effect on the value of his characters. The traditional faith and outlook of his race weighs on Johannes Rosmer so heavily that hardly for a moment is he an independent being. It is so strong that it has defeated

Rebecca West before the drama begins. 'Rosmersholm has sapped my strength. My old fearless will has had its wings clipped here. It is crippled! The time is past when I had courage for anything in the world. I have lost the power of action, Rosmer.' The presence in the plot of so villainous a force and so helpless a hero and heroine makes the play almost a melodrama of the spirit. Tradition changed Rebecca's passion to love, but it sapped and destroyed her will, until she is neither hard enough nor strong enough to master the past at a moment when mastery was imperative. Passion maintained her will: that gone, she falls a victim to the Rosmer view of life. This is as depressing a view of human nature as is Rosmer's rapid collapse. Self-realisation kills him. Tradition and the Rosmer heritage refine a man but they destroy his value for life, and consequently his value for drama. *Rosmersholm* is a drama of slaves, and as such tends to depress. That it is not an artistic failure is Ibsen's triumph. But neither is it a complete artistic achievement. At the close of the play the mental state of Rosmer and Rebecca approaches the pathological. Under the dominion of the Rosmersholm view of life Rebecca prepares to throw herself from the bridge, a victim to Rosmer's morbid weakness. He is the victim of an *idée fixe.* 'Have you the courage—have you the will—gladly, as Ulric Brendel said—for my sake, to-night—gladly to go the same way that Beata went?—that is the question that will for ever haunt me—when you are gone. Every hour in the day it will return upon me. Oh, I seem to see you before my very eyes. You are standing out on the footbridge—right in the middle. Now you are bending forward over the railing—drawn dizzily downwards, downwards towards the rushing water! No—you recoil. You have not the heart to do what she dared.' Their mill-race is the only end possible to a drama of impotence. The struggles, feeble and pre-determined, of two slaves, are not a subject for the highest tragedy.

But even the doctrine of heredity may be subdued to dramatic form. Add to it a faith in human responsibility and in the ability of man to dominate the present—even to shape the future, and the highest drama becomes possible. *Rosmersholm* comes near depressing : *Ghosts* near inspiring. It is not completely successful. The physical signs of hereditary disease are dwelt upon with disproportionate emphasis. They depend too often on scientific doctrines already called in question; hence their prominence in the play is an element of weakness. The curse which Oswald inherits might be one of two diseases, neither of which is correctly suggested in the play. That, when the progress of the disease forms the chief external action, is a dramatic sin; all the more so that it is committed by a master of realism. That *Ghosts* is a great play it owes to the power of Ibsen's use of retribution as dramatic motive. Disaster approaches with the force of the classic conception. Sin takes its punishment, if not from the father, from his children, or his children's children. The spiritual power of the idea is developed through Mrs Alving. With her slow realisation of its truth the catastrophe is on them. By the restraint of the dialogue, by the dramatic concentration of the action, by the reality of its pity and terror, *Ghosts* is great. It does not steal from life by depressing; its gift to life is the knowledge that man has power over future man. That is his immortality. And that faith, the immortal part of *Ghosts*.

As in *Rosmersholm* so in *Ghosts*, the more insistent the doctrine of heredity the less the dramatic power. The plays where the characters are strong enough to shake off the past are plays where inherited traits are not dominant. It is significant of Ibsen's submission to his age that they are less successful as drama. *Little Eyolf* ends in reconciliation and the promise of strength; and we believe in neither. The plays of Ibsen's last phase are freer from an insistence on heredity than the earlier ones, but without exception they are poorer drama than *Ghosts* or *Rosmersholm.* In that respect Ibsen is a slave to his age. When as a philosopher he forgot its preoccupations, he was less successful as a dramatist. That is part weakness and part strength. Its weakness is seen in *Rosmersholm,* and in *Rosmersholm* the utmost of its possibility. For if his past weighs on Rosmer until he is too weak to live, he is thereby an eternal type. The past must always kill those worn-out and unable to create; their place is needed for new activities, in their turn to grow old and barren. The life force turns upon itself to make way for the creation of new life. Its self-immolation may make fine drama, pitiful drama, but not great tragedy. That is reserved for the defeat of conscious strength.

There is a third doctrine with which Ibsen's drama is associated. It is philosophic: the doctrine of individualism. As with the other faiths that he absorbed, its form in his drama is two-fold. From one standpoint, that of its opposition to the doctrine of equality, it is an element of strength. Men are no more equal as subjects of drama than as combative intellects. A realisation of that truth is the first principle of dramatic characterisation.

On the other hand, there is the danger that the artist may fail to distinguish between the self-assertion of conscious power and the futile chafing of the degenerate, who can neither adapt himself to the conditions of life nor create fresh ones. Into this trap Ibsen fell in *Hedda Gabler.* The play is a sterile trifling with degeneration. And that in spite of some power in its study of character. Hedda's savage sensitiveness to personal indignity has a passing distinction. She achieves it in her reaction against Tesman's undignified joy over her coming motherhood.

> TESMAN (laughing in irrepressible glee) : The servant ! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda. It's only my old Berta ! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.
>
> HEDDA (clutching her hands together in desperation): Oh, it is killing me—it is killing me, all this !

Equally distinctive is the quick self-control with which she turns aside his unwitting trampling on all her instincts of privacy.

But on the whole she has little claim to the distinction even of superior villainy. She shows herself at first as the ordinary type of disloyal and rather vulgar wife. She discusses her boredom and her husband's shortcomings with Brack, making uninteresting conversation after such fashion as this—'Since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me, I really don't know why I should not have accepted his offer?' As the drama develops she shows herself neurotic and ill-balanced. She refuses to see a dying woman who loved her because she dislikes a sick-room. 'No, no, don't ask me. I will not look upon sickness and death. I loathe all sorts of ugliness.' Her stupid insult to Aunt Julia; and her sick loathing of the manner of Lövborg's death show her insanely irritable and supersensitive. Later, her character acquires the undesirable distinction of decadence. Jealous of Thea's power over Lövborg, she asserts her own by taunting him into drinking, and going to a supper party where the temptation to drink more would be severe—'I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny.' But that is not all. She would test his strength to give herself the æsthetic pleasure of seeing him return 'with vine leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless.'

This is the natural speech of degeneracy; sterile dreams of great power and wonderful beauty, desire for terrific passions. Impotent herself, she takes an æsthetic joy in the startling acts of others. Her delight in Lövborg's suicide is one such sign of decadence. 'It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in the world—a deed of spontaneous beauty.' Degenerate natures desire perpetually an exotic and 'flushed' beauty. Beauty of their own they have not to give: they can only demand—and destroy. So Hedda Gabler. Mrs Elsted's reproach of Lövborg. 'How could you then—Did not the child belong to me too?' moves her to a resentful—'Ah, the child——' She inspires Lövborg to kill himself, bidding him do it 'beautifully, Eilert Lövborg. Promise me that.' Were that her only act of the kind, it would prove her the hysterical degenerate, restlessly desiring outrageous pleasures. Not even her death ennobles her. Her pride revolts at the idea of being Brack's slave, and she shoots herself. But it was her own ill-considered act that put her in his power, and her stupid fear of an explanation in court. Her hysteria and lack of balance enslaved her: her weakness saw death as the only way out. The play is ugly, it has nothing of inspiration, and leaves only the sense of having witnessed a painful incident. Hence, as a work of art, it is a failure. It is significant that its external action is of more importance than the spiritual development. As in the study of character, the interest is in the unnatural desires and deeds of a pathological nature, so the action tends almost to melodrama. The departure of Lövborg for the supper party, the burning of the manuscript, the suicide of Hedda, leave an uneasy impression of prearranged effect. And when we reflect on all the pathological studies, all the neurotic women and querulous decadents that have entered the theatre through the door opened by Hedda Gabler, we find it hard to forgive her for her follies, or Ibsen for her creation.

A saner conception of individualism asserts itself in *An Enemy of the People.* Here Ibsen is content with three undeniable pieces of philosophy. The majority are of necessity chained by their age: 'pulsating life has nothing more to do with them.' Truths die and become falsehoods. For an excellent and effective statement of that idea we need go no further back than Milton. Lastly, Democracy is not an ideal, but a makeshift: 'the masses are nothing but the raw material that must be fashioned into a people.' Such philosophy is very well in its way, but it is neither original, nor, if the truth be told, very well realised as drama. The value to his drama of Ibsen's doctrine of individualism is not in such scraps of sociology, nor in the creation of Ellida Wangels and Hedda Gablers. It lies elsewhere, in the distinction, spiritual and intellectual, through which the men and women of his great drama are lifted above the day into a region timeless and changeless. That is its sole dramatic value in his work: it is a high one.

His ultimate greatness

The ultimate greatness of Ibsen's drama is not in any of these doctrines and ideas that are torn from it. Nor is it in his technical art. He achieved a supreme power of construction: in his great plays deep thought informs a dialogue of classic restraint and force. But his technique is common property, borrowed and used by playwrights, more or less incompetent, unable to borrow the power of his personality or his dramatic genius. Nor is it in the poetic beauty, most obvious, as most exultant, in *Peer Gynt* and *Brand*. Those plays have limitations that go far to lessen their imaginative value. The poetic fantasy in Peer Gynt's wild ride along the Gendin Edge, in the legendary nature of the Trolls, and the parable of the Button-moulder, hardly balances the confused satire of the fourth act, an inartistic chaos—imaginative farce. Indeed, Ibsen's imagination in *Peer Gynt* turns rather to fantasy, crude or delicate, and to allegory, than to lyrical beauty. There are scenes of intense poetic power, but on the whole it is in its humanity that the power of the drama lies; in Peer Gynt's shame; in his alternate coaxing and tormenting of his mother; his visions and disillusion; in the spirit that leaves him still dreaming of greatness in every fall; in the pathos and beauty of Ase's death; in Solveig's love and Peer Gynt's passionate weakness.

> 'My mother; my wife; oh, thou innocent woman!
> In thy love—oh, there hide me, hide me!'

Nor does Ibsen's final greatness lie in his capacity for enduring freedom and the terror of truth. Yet is that no mean thing. Though his men and women struggle against odds too great, though almost all of them are slaves, they have the vision of truth, and seek freedom, knowing that they cannot find it and live. But even Ibsen interpreted the vision ill at times. Witness the dramatic futility of the *Lady from the Sea*, and the symbolic falsity of *When we Dead Awaken*.

Indeed, he saw the possible absurdity of his faith in the hands of incompetent followers. *The Wild Duck* is his warning. So irritating is the symbolism in this play that for my part I believe he saw and ridiculed the possible absurdity of *that*.

Permit me to digress. *The Wild Duck* is an extraordinary play in many ways. In spite of its tragedy it is intensely comic. Nowhere else does Ibsen succeed in creating humour of the highest order. The gloriously matter-of-fact Gina, the inept Hialmar, and Gregers Werle of the sickly conscience are not merely laughable: they are comic types. This sounds almost as if a man should speak of the side-splitting comedy of *Macbeth,* or the rollicking farce of *Othello.* In the *Wild Duck* tragedy lies beneath much of the laughter, and appears in unmasked terror at the end. But in truth the underlying pathos serves but to make the laughter that highest kind, the laughter of thought. The tragic end accentuates the humour of the whole. Humorous it certainly is: Hialmar is exquisitely drawn. A colossal *poseur*, he spends his life playing a succession of parts, deceiving himself into an imagined nobility of character. At Werle's dinner he is nervous and gauche. But when he comes home he talks of the self-possession with which he snubbed the Chamberlains: 'They were requested to observe that it was just the same with Chamberlains—that with them too, different batches were of different qualities.' He lets his broken-down father depart without acknowledgment and then in exalted self-pity says—'Gregers, I am going! When a man has felt the crushing hand of Fate——' He poses even before his child, demanding her flattery. Reminded that he promised to bring her a dainty from the feast, he presents her with the menu, and meets her disappointment with the offer to tell her how he enjoyed each course. Moved by a momentary feeling of meanness, he justifies himself to himself by a dramatic pathos. 'No, no flute for me; *I* want no pleasures in this world.' That proving insufficient, he forgets meanness and pleases his æsthetic sense by wallowing in a remorse for 'battening at the groaning board.'

Then, selfish as he is weak, he leaves Hedwig to do his work while he amuses himself in the little museum. Perhaps his most purely comic moments are when he tells of his father's cowardice in not shooting himself during his trial; and then of his own attempted suicide at the same time. 'At the decisive moment I won the victory over myself. I remained in life. But I can assure you it takes some courage to choose life under circumstances like those.'

The contrast of his magnificent self-deception with his wife's business outlook is intensely laughable. When, after he has been married to her for twelve years, he learns of her premarital sin, he plays gloriously. Hialmar, noble and injured husband, to his erring wife (housekeeper, servant, business partner), 'Have you not, every day, every hour, repented of the spider's web of deceit you have spun round me? Answer me that! How could you help writhing with penitence and remorse!' But Gina, unable to act against him, can only say—'Oh, my dear Ekdal, I've had all I could do to look after the house and get through the day's work.' I can think of few scenes that give better scope for comedy-acting of the finest kind than the conversation between husband and wife when Hialmar's vision of a dignified separation fights with his desire to remain at home drinking Gina's excellent coffee and living on the money she earns by doing his photographic work. In spite of the pathos of Hedwig's purity set in this society of drunkards and liars, the mockery of false idealism is delightful. Gregers of the sickly conscience is determined to make a true marriage of this placid household. In common with many reformers, he imagines that the ideal is for use as a sort of disinfectant. He thinks Hialmar a noble soul. 'And there he is now, with his great confiding childlike mind, compassed about with all this treachery—living under the same roof with such a creature, and never dreaming that what he calls his house is built upon a lie.' The humour of his folly, and Relling's contemptuous exposure of the 'spiritual tumult,' grows bitter as tragedy approaches. The mischief wrought by Gregers' idiocy and Hialmar's selfish love of play-acting is terrible. Hedwig is in agony when her father sees fit to bid her leave his sight. Between them, Hialmar and Gregers are responsible for her death, Gregers directly by his imbecile suggestion—'If you possessed the true joyous, fearless spirit of sacrifice——' And so she shoots herself to restore her father's happiness. 'That's what comes of it when crazy creatures go about presenting the claims of the what-you-may call it.'

The joyous laughter of thought, bitter irony, pitiful sorrow follow each other in the *Wild Duck*. It is the greatest tragi-comedy in the drama of modernity. Its pitiless insight as well serves artistic truth as does the spiritual movement in the pure tragedies. The vision of freedom, seen from the other side, is henceforth clearer to us than had we seen it only through the pain of *Ghosts* and the pity of *Rosmersholm*. If this vision is not Ibsen's greatest gift to drama, it is that which gave to the greatest its superlative excellence. His search for the truths of the soul makes his thought timeless. It belongs to past, present and future, as a search for the truth of social conditions cannot.

Not in constructive art, not in his gift of imagination, not in his search for spiritual truth is the power that gives Ibsen his highest place in the movement to realism. His supreme achievement is the rhythm of character and action from which his drama is woven. I speak of his perfected work. In that work an intuitive knowledge of the human soul and a technical power combine to produce characters that reveal themselves through a spiritual development in perfect accord with external action and surroundings. Each of his great dramas is an organic whole, of which the action is the body, and the spiritual movement the soul. They move in an imaginative harmony wherein each phase of character or action is subordinated to the one purpose and vision. In them the characters fall into two classes: the free, the Dionysian, who can re-adapt life when the force of truth has laid it in ruins round them; and those others who are not strong enough to bear the truth, and die because life needs a new creative spirit. The Dionysian type has few representatives in Ibsen's drama. The spirit of his age, a spirit of scientific pessimism and determinate philosophy, pressed on him. When he shook it off the effort was so great that his art suffered. So in *Little Eyolf*. After the agony of seeing themselves selfish and useless, Rita and Allmers determine to find redemption in serving and uplifting the poor round them. At this point in the drama they quietly fade away. True, they must redeem the past if they are not to perish, and Rita at least is not of those who go under. But Ibsen fails to realise them in their resurrection. As a consequence we are left cold and unsatisfied, not believing in the manner of their atonement.

For the most part, the characters of his drama are men and women who realise slowly the need for re-creation of their life. Then, being incapable of re-creation, they die. No man can see the truth and live, if he be not strong enough to accept it and turn it to the service of life. The weight of heredity and the past is too heavy on them. Like Rosmer, they cannot shake off tradition or the deeds of the past. Or like Rebecca, they believe that the future must be like the past, governed by desires and needs fixed in the past, and unchangeable in the future. At least they see the truth, and the vision gives them the distinction of mind and soul that is essential to the characters of fine drama. Moreover, they are eternal types. In every generation there are those who realise that they have no longer anything to give to life, and in the realisation die, driven by life's eternal necessity for new force. Their place is taken by beings who can re-create a new faith on the ruins of illusion, making the future in their own fashion. Ibsen is the interpreter of an ever-recurring type, and as such beyond time and change. The characters of his finest plays are the visions of a sculptor, to which a divine power gives life and soul.

CHAPTER III

WHILE IBSEN CAME. OSCAR WILDE: AN INTERLUDE

THE effect of Ibsen on the drama of the north was immediate; his effect on dramatic criticism was of shorter duration, but in England and Germany at least, equally startling. What little influence he had on the drama of the south was indirect and diffuse. For the most part, the southern theatre has gone its way untouched by the Ibsen spirit. Some few dramatists, both in Italy and Spain, came under its influence, but not for long. During all this time the movement called Naturalism fought in the south with tradition and the promise of a re-creation along lines nearer the national spirit. The effects of the struggle are to be seen in the drama of southern authors whose fame is European.

As for Russia, Ibsen could teach her dramatists nothing in realism, little in depth of thought, and they were not inclined to learn his technical art. It is impossible to say that his drama had any influence on them. They appreciated what is great in him, passed over what is ephemeral, paying the tribute of genius to genius.

For evidence of the direct influence of Ibsen it is necessary to turn to the stage of the other northern countries. That is merely saying that his influence was almost entirely on the dominant drama. Not all the dramatists of realism who followed, imitated him, but none of them surpassed. They borrowed his constructive art. In rare instances the corpse took on the appearance of life. But those dramatists who broke away from his tradition have one and all failed to justify their new technique. Only to-day are there signs that a new creative activity is stirring. The movement that started with Ibsen's drama has travelled a long way, and lost power and vitality in its wayfaring.

The immediate effect of Ibsen's plays was to produce an appearance of life in the work of playwrights who borrowed both his technique and what they could appreciate of his thought. Its second and greater effect was to stimulate original writers to surpass him. Shaw and Hauptmann alike tried to break away from the lines that his genius imposed on the realist drama. Both these dramatists experiment in an original technique: both have only a partial success. Thus, although it is not true to say that the influence of Ibsen is everywhere, it is true that his was the greatest impulse, and that his remains the highest achievement. Even those dramatists who possess originality and power have been unable to read the secret of his spiritual movement. Seeing its outward side they attempted a study of character. Without his patient insight, they succeeded only in making a copy of such moods, thoughts, and acts as are observable by all. Ibsen studies the soul of man: they who come after him study creatures of the moment, the peculiar result of passing social conditions. Take the greatest English dramatist of them all: take Mr Shaw. What do you know from his drama of the soul of John Tanner? You hear his theories, and observe that he puts none of them into practice, but you are little better able to appreciate the spiritual value of his character than that of the figures on a tapestry. You see as much of him as Mr Shaw is able to present in his words and his few deeds. Tanner tells nothing of himself: all you know, his author tells you. But in the words of Rebecca West, her spiritual nature slowly unfolds into perfect vision. That is the difference.

We are concerned now with the first and dubious effect of Ibsen's plays on the realist drama of the north. England, less open to foreign influence than Germany, had been practically untouched by the naturalist movement that swept Europe. Hence the order of influence was reversed, and Ibsen paved the way in English drama for a late Naturalism of a thoroughly unnatural kind. The harshness of his reception by the critics was partly due to the order of his arrival. When *Ghosts* and the *Wild Duck* appeared at the Théâtre Libre, they were treated as thoughtful dramas, worthy of discussion and analysis. Sarcey and Lemaître were both respectful, Lemaître almost appreciative. In England the critics lost themselves in a Serbonian bog of abuse. The storm passed, and their readers found themselves thoroughly dissatisfied with plays of the *Money Spinner* order. They could not forget the possibilities of constructive and psychological art that had been revealed in Ibsen's work. Nor could English playwrights ignore them and their commercial value. In 1891 *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* were both played in England. Two years later Mr Pinero, all unknighted, produced his great drawing-room version of Ibsen: *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*. In this play he attempts the technique of Ibsen, a retracing of the past, and the development of its heritage in the present: and also a psychological study after Norwegian methods. But Paula is without distinction, mental or spiritual. The dress of Ibsen's heroine sits ill on her. From the beginning she shows herself a woman of commonplace mind: in her reproaches to her husband for the dullness of their life at his country house, a life her past made necessary; in

Pinero

her stupid jealousy of his daughter; her complaints to Cayley, and her plebeian discourtesy to Mrs Cortelyon. She insists upon inviting Sir George and Lady Orreyed to stay with them, though Lady Orreyed is 'impossible,' and Sir George drinks. Her words and actions are those of an ordinary, pleasure-loving woman, quite unable to appreciate the sensitive chivalry of the man who married her. There is a moment when she provokes sympathy. The step-daughter whose love she sought is taken away by one of the women who have shunned her, and she cries out in bitter scorn of 'the refining influence of these intensely respectable surroundings.'

Of spiritual development there is very little. Throughout the play the heroine of melodrama peers through the Ibsen mask. Deeds and words are out of harmony. Aubrey tells Paula that she cannot be fit company for Ellean, and recalls her to herself as she was a few years ago. Suddenly, she feels intensely sorry for herself, and bursts into 'a paroxysm of weeping'—'Oh, God! a few years ago!' With that departs her last chance of attaining a natural distinction. True, it is just what an adventuress of mediocre mind might do. But Paula, we are given to understand, is not mediocre. Compare with this amateur crudeness the psychological subtlety of Wilde in just such an incident. Lord Windermere attempts to reproach Mrs Erlynne—'I wish that at the same time she would give you a miniature she kisses every night before she prays. It's the miniature of a young, innocent-looking girl with beautiful *dark* hair.'

Mrs Erlynne: Ah, yes, I remember. How long ago that seems. It was done before I was married. Dark hair, and an innocent expression were the fashion then.'

After her descent to the Adelphi, Paula's apotheosis at the end is decidedly unnatural. Her insight, her realisation that all the past must be reckoned with, are unlike the Paula we have been permitted to know, and unlike her type. She kills herself, after telling Aubrey that she is incapable of change. 'And then, some day, perhaps very suddenly under a queer fantastic light at night or in the glare of the morning —that horrid, irresistible truth that physical repulsion forces on men and women will come to you, and you'll sicken at me.' This is poor Paula's only moment of distinction : it is obtained at the cost of destroying what consistency and reality the study of her nature possessed.

The technique of the play is uneven, opening with a crude piece of stage mechanism. But on the whole the advance on Mr Pinero's early plays is little short of miraculous. There are scraps of insight in Aubrey's hesitation to bid his daughter love this second wife of his; in the cold purity that let Ellean forgive the man and reject the woman. In technique and attempt at subtlety, *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* is far ahead of Mr Pinero's earlier work. In originality of thought, in artistic truth it has advanced not a step. It is an attempt to put conventional ideas and commonplace people into the mould of Ibsen's drama. The result is an improvement in the form, with no appreciable difference in the content.

The truth of the case is seen more clearly in *The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith.* Agnes is a far more glaring instance than Paula Tanqueray of Mr Pinero's inability to see below the surface of character, or to appreciate in any way a difference in the dramatic values of human beings. It emphasises, moreover, the little justification of his claim to modernity. Agnes Ebbsmith stood on tubs and in public halls, and talked until her voice failed. We find her a believer in the cant of comradeship between man and woman, with Lucas Cleeve as comrade. Her eccentricities slowly estrange him; realising it, she adopts the methods of the prostitute, and dresses herself in an immodest gown to rouse his passion. Her affectation of comradeship and the faith she has vehemently preached are gone in an instant. 'My sex has found me out.' She is revealed as an ordinary woman, driven to surrender by the convention of feminine weakness. She is driven, moreover, to the old cant of sex. It lends weight to the charge that women have no shame but only physical modesty. That gone, shame and pride go too. Lucas flings scornfully aside all their plans for the future and plans a new one with her as harem favourite. And she says 'There is only one hour in a woman's life. . . . Her poor life is like the arch of a crescent; so many years lead up to that hour, so many weary years decline from it.' That hour is a sexual triumph. Even when she learns that Lucas is willing to accept a sham reconciliation with his wife and keep her in a separate establishment, she holds to her 'hour.' The shallowness of Mr Pinero's knowledge of character is nowhere more apparent. Do we believe in the Agnes who had the courage to hold and preach advanced views on morality and religion? Then how reconcile her with the woman who surrenders to a desire that cannot be gratified without loss of self-respect? How again reconcile this second Agnes with the woman at the end, who is sane enough to say—'I was to be the example—the figure set up for others to observe and imitate. But the figure was made of wax—it fell away at the first hot breath that touched it.' Did the gift of the Bible and her rescue of it endow her with insight at the same time as it jerked the action to a point whence it might easily reach a conclusion?

The only psychological truth in the play is in the study of Lucas Cleeve, weak, selfish, degenerate. If Mr Pinero meant to write a satire on the modern comrade-woman, he has succeeded. But, as the first scene proves, he meant to draw a modern woman and show her degraded, too sorely tried by man's selfishness and lack of understanding. He has failed in his attempt both at psychology and constructive subtlety. His technical incompetence is eked out with such sensational tricks as Mrs Ebbsmith's rescue of the burning Bible. If Paula were not sufficient proof, it needed but Agnes to show his utter lack of dramatic ability.

It would have been better if Mr Pinero had not attempted to make Ibsen a commercial success. Let us see how far he had advanced from the *Money Spinner* before the vision of *Ghosts* tempted and mocked him. Take *The Profligate,* written some few years before *The Second Mrs Tanqueray.* It is very crudely constructed, with an appalling insistence upon coincidence, asides, and the usual mistake depending on a non-utterance of the most natural words. The action is entirely external. But in attempt at observation, and in dramatic sense, it is far ahead of his earlier plays, though not one of its figures are of more than passing interest.

There is a later play, more significant. Ibsen's influence here is indirect: it has stimulated only, not provided material for Mr Pinero to cheapen. *The Benefit of the Doubt* was written two years after *The Second Mrs Tanqueray.* It attempts no psychological study. Yet the characters are more real than in any other of Mr Pinero's plays. In construction, it returns to *The Profligate,* and the development of an external action. But there are few conventional tricks and the action is easily unfolded. The family wait for the result of a divorce case brought against Thea by a jealous wife. Their premature rejoicing is broken short by the return of Thea and her husband with the news that the verdict is almost a 'Not Proven.' From this point the story complicates itself naturally up to the interview between Thea and Jack Allingham, the dramatic force of which is lessened by the inconsistent meanness of the man's behaviour. There is a moment when the two women stare at each other before Thea breaks down. It is the crisis of the play, and not ill-planned. After that the interest lessens, until the trouble is settled by the intervention of the Bishop. As every other play of Mr Pinero, this is concerned entirely with second-rate people who have no possible value beyond the moment. But the daubs of modernity that disfigure Paula and Agnes are not here. It is the direct descendant of *The Profligate*, written when experience and practice had strengthened Mr Pinero's technique and deepened his knowledge of character. The playwright of *The Benefit of the Doubt* is vastly superior to the second Mr Pinero.

It is not in malice that I have given so disproportionate an amount of space to this work, but because to understand this—its genesis—is to understand the hybrid psychological drama that was born of Ibsen's contact with the English theatre; and remains still the ideal of most 'serious' young dramatists.

H. A. Jones

That Mr H. A. Jones felt the impulse given by Ibsen's drama appears in his swift progress from technical incompetence to technical neatness. The difference between the plays written before 1891 and those written after is incredible; it is seen even in a play so near farce as *The Case of Rebellious Susan*. Here are only the people whom the dramatist knew well, presented with a smile for their follies. Mr Jones has no desire for an appearance of modernity: he laughs at the Ibsen philosophy even then becoming current cant. Elaine wishes to marry a brainless decadent and expresses herself thus—'Why should we dwarf and stunt ourselves, physically, morally, intellectually, for the sake of propping up a society that is decrepit and moribund to its core?' And Susan threatens revolt, but is annoyed that any one could suppose her serious. Most of the people are somewhat plebeian, and the rebellion is a farce. It is a cheerfully third-rate comedy, of no value. The only reason for its appearance here is the necessity of tracing the first effect of Ibsen's drama on the work of existing second-rate playwrights.

Michael and his Lost Angel was produced two years later. In that play Mr H. A. Jones reached the limit of his power. It is little more than a series of dialogues. In them he came nearer than any other English dramatist of the time to a realisation of the power behind Ibsen's studies of little towns and middle-class people. It is not achievement, it is approach. The slow change in Michael is imperfectly suggested. At the first, it requires an effort to realise his stern truthfulness. In consequence, the forcing of Rose Gibbard to a public confession jars. The vision of Audrey gradually dominates his life. It is a dramatic fault that we learn the strength of his feelings with so little preparation. It makes his sin on the island appear less one of passion than of weakness. Audrey herself is somewhat uninteresting, little better than a rich coquette. Having burned her fingers, she conveniently dies, almost atoning for the theatrical necessity of her death by the cheerful manner of it. Michael ends the play with a final surrender to his love. 'Take me! I give my life, my will, my soul to you! Do what you please with me! I'll believe all, do all, suffer all—only—only persuade me that I shall meet her again.'

With the dubious exception of this one drama, there is nothing in the work of these English pioneers of dramatic realism that will bear the light of the present. Where they remained in their own groove, they attained a mediocre success. Where they attempted to follow Ibsen they ignominiously failed. The reason of their failure is not far to seek. Incapable of original thought, of the supreme power that alone can create great character, they seized the framework of Ibsen's drama to fill it with borrowed thoughts and little people. Where they attempted a drama of revolt, it sank from man's spiritual struggle against the forces of death to a story of his entanglement with laws, judicial and moral. The first belongs to the realm of the spirit; the second to the Assize Court or the Methodist Church. The people of this drama are creatures of their time and their peculiar social surrounding. They never rise above it, and as conditions pass the people lose what little interest they had. The drama concerned with them is dead as soon as it appears. The fate of artistic camp-followers is always such. The conventional playwright, the Pinero, is an imitation dramatist. Like Sudermann in Germany, Sir Arthur Pinero saw that realism and psychological analysis could be turned to good account were they reduced to the level of the drawing-room spectator. His attempt at presenting life-like people came as such a shock in the state of the English drama at the time, that it passed for modernity. But in very truth, it was only the bad copy of a feeble vision of it. For no dramatist is modern who treats only of to-day and to-day's people, unless he can endow them with the spirit of to-morrow.

Germany

From Pinero to Sudermann the way is not far. In Germany, as in England, opportunist playwrights saw the possibilities of the new movement. But the conditions of German drama were different. The naturalist movement had a footing in Germany before Ibsen's work made its influence felt. The contrast here is not between native incompetence, and that same incompetence modified and brought up to date. It is between the new drama of the naturalist and the newer drama influenced by Ibsen. The contrast is marked in the early work of Sudermann and Hauptmann.

One year before the appearance of *Ghosts* at the Freie Bühne, Sudermann produced his first play. *Die Ehre* works native tradition, French society drama, and the new ideas into a mixture calculated to interest without offending. A conventional *raisonneur* and much witty dialogue give the element of French brilliance. Half the characters and half the plot are in the direct descent from German writers of bourgeois drama, Roderick Benedix and Moser, who even after the revolution of 1830 were still following the methods of the astounding Kotzebue. To this part of the play belong the rich merchant, his vain, gossiping wife, frivolous son, and noble daughter in love with a poor and thoroughly virtuous youth. The plot is mainly concerned with the difficulties in the way of their love. But Sudermann, with the foresight of a good business man, has seized on the new movement that at the Freie Bühne was soon to produce *Ghosts*, *Henriette Maréchal*, and *The Powers of Darkness*. So in his play there is a mean house where people of a lower class watch the mansion, hating and envying its family. He makes no attempt to show the significance of the contrast, capable only of cheap exploitation of it. Money in his play solves the difficulty, without regard to dramatic truth or economic reality. The whole play is a shrewd speculation in a coming movement, backed by sound theatrical sense. His time was well chosen, and *Die Ehre* had an extraordinary success.

So far as he had employed the new ideas, he took them from the hand of the naturalists. So also in *Sodoms Ende* where there is the same theatrical contrast between the artist's home and the society into which he is dragged. But in this play his sketch of the moral rottenness of the upper middle-class gave offence. The play failed. Sudermann, recovering, perceived Ibsen, a Norwegian dramatist. Straightway, he seized upon another dramatic ideal; the presentation of a personality in conflict with the conditions of life. The change from external action to an attempt at spiritual movement is startling. So far as the sensational interest of his plays goes, the effect is good: their popular success was instant. In dramatic truth they are on the level of *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, though in technical skill they are far in advance of anything in contemporary English drama. Sudermann possesses a sense of the theatre: hence his exploitation of Ibsen is more successful than that of Sir Arthur Pinero. That it is as worthless is a matter for further proof. Sufficient now to point out that in Germany, as in England, the effect of Ibsen on the conventional playwright is to produce a startling access of skill without a corresponding originality. The doctrine of heredity, pessimism, and a determinist philosophy were already abroad in the works of the naturalists. Hence it was not its ideas so much as the beauty of its form that attracted disciples and robbers to Ibsen's drama.

Few men could be less alike than Sudermann and Hauptmann. Hauptmann is a poet, a man of original mind, a dreamer: Sudermann, a charlatan and a maker of plays. But Hauptmann's work is weakest on its technical side. His early plays reflect the working of Ibsen's influence better than do Sudermann's business experiments. *Vor Sonnenaufgang* came first. It might have come from the stage of the Théâtre Libre. It is pessimistic and hopelessly fatalist. Its people act, react, refuse to act, according to Natural Law. The character of Helene and the episodic love-making are used to accentuate the misery and hopelessness of the end. One thing and one alone makes Hauptmann other than a blind follower of the blind. That is Loth's answer to Helene's question—'Zola and Ibsen are much spoken of in the newspapers, are they great writers?' Loth replies—'They are not writers at all—they are necessary evils. I thirst and desire from literature a clean refreshing draught. I am not sick. What Zola and Ibsen offer is medicine.' Leaving aside the confusion of thought implied in the answer, it remains a significant sign of Hauptmann's dissatisfaction with the current form of the dramatic revolt.

In his next play, *Das Friedenfest,* he is following Ibsen, and again with a difference. The form of his drama has changed. The external action is of less importance; most of it has taken place before the opening of the play. This, and an added power in the suggestion of spiritual values, places the play far ahead of *Vor Sonnenaufgang*. These things Hauptmann learned from Ibsen. What he did not learn from him is the final discredit thrown on the doctrine of heredity. That may be inexperience: more probably it is a promise of release. The faults of the play are partly of immaturity, partly of inherent weakness. Hauptmann never succeeds in creating an eternal type in his men and women. He creates them dissatisfied with the present, clutching at the fringe of the future. Their unrest and their half-vision is their creator's claim to greatness. In *Das Friedenfest,* weak as it is, realist drama makes its first stumbling step toward an understanding of Ibsen's lesson.

Realist drama in France was affected to a less degree than in Germany and England. On the whole that may be accounted to it for righteousness. The spirit that informs Ibsen's work is distinctly alien to the Gallic spirit. Serious treatment of sex and its kindred ills is permitted only to genius. Where a lesser man deals with such things, his seriousness is apt to become heaviness, or pompous inanity. It would seem that the French are instinctively aware of the fact. Hence their secondary artists treat sex either frankly as melodrama, or equally frankly as a subject for jest. Great passions and great sorrows are left to great artists. Even in France there are playwrights and novelists, exceptions to this artistic law. There is M. Brieux. In every case it is so much the worse for the exceptions.

France

So also with other ideas behind Ibsen's drama. Writers of realist plays in general, clutching at the apparent thought in his work, have produced a fearsome thing called the drama of ideas. Of the informing spirit they saw nothing. We may doubt whether the French writers of realist plays saw any more of this spiritual value than did their Teutonic fellows. It is probable that they did not. But when French dramatists were introduced to the ideas in Ibsen's plays, they did not straightway found a dramatic ideal on them. They said—'All these things we have known from our youth up. They may be true, but they are not original, and we are not startled.' And they were perfectly right. Ibsen's ideas are not original. His greatness does not depend on them. *An Enemy of the People* is exclusively a drama of ideas. It is not impressive, and already it loses interest and vitality. The ideas of *Ghosts* were not new, even in Ibsen's time. They were still less new in the literature of France. But the spiritual value behind them is Ibsen's own gift. It is that which makes *Ghosts* one of the great plays of modernity. Unable to reproduce the soul of his drama, French playwrights declined to worship the idea. It is to the honour of their intellect and their dramatic vision. Their critics gave Ibsen tolerance when England and Germany were shrieking abuse. Heirs to a tradition of constructive power, they gave generous recognition to his skill. In the work of dramatists like M. Hervieu the influence of his technique is clear. But by reason of their curious perception of Ibsen, which is both appreciation and lack of appreciation, his influence in France is far less marked than in the other countries of the north.

This early effect of Ibsen on the new drama, now grown an old and wearisome thing, should have made clear what are the services he rendered to it. In the first place he saved the movement from itself. There is no need to look further than the work of Mr Masefield in *Nan*, Mr Phillpotts in *The Secret Woman* to realise into what depths of incoherence and inartistic blundering the naturalist movement must have fallen, had not Ibsen come with an ideal of realism that renewed its strength and gave it a nobler meaning. Apart from that service to art, his drama paved the way for many ill-deeds done in the name of realism. He was an artist, who, out of the fullness of his power re-created the facts of life, giving them back to art and to life made significant and beautiful. He ruled his world. Too many of those who prate of realism rule nothing but are ruled by the life they exploit. They imitate where he interpreted. He destroyed: faiths, conventions, lies, crumble up in his drama. But in destroying he created afresh. Among later realist writers are not a few with the intellectual power to destroy shams. There was only one with the inspired art that can give back faith and hope for lost illusions and defensive lies. He was a Russian. In consequence, the realist drama of to-day is a disintegrating force. Faith died before Mr Shaw destroyed its landmarks in society. Modern realism has no new faith to put in its place, nor any purpose beyond pushing mankind into scientific or sociological blind alleys. The inner value of Ibsen's men and women is their eternal revolt against the lie and the worn-out faith. The glory of his patient insight could not be imitated. The surface value of his thought and his form could. Through the door he opened came dramatists bent on reform. Social science takes the place of art; the stage is a museum where appear—stuffed—the current theories and fads of a day, even to theosophy, pathology, and psycho-analysis. Hence M. Brieux's pecks at social evils; hence such plays as *Mrs Warren's Profession,* in which there is neither spiritual movement nor constructive harmony. Fabianism is a narrow platform for a dramatist. It permits him neither intuition nor interpretation; but provides every chance for logical wood-cutting, dissection, lecture, and forcible psychology.

With the reforming realists came those who exploit life under the shadow of drama, seeing only the physical side of Ibsen's creations. They have stolen from life a countless horde of characters, featureless, soulless, mindless, whose names and traits are forgotten in an hour. And since the physical deficiencies of decadents, hysterical women, and degenerates of every sort produce varied mental aberrations, there are many plays in which such products form plot and motive. Hence the entrance into the drama of excited feminists (sacrifices to society, most of whom are too feeble to please any man-eating deity), and pathological specimens of every kind.

Imagination and grace are not in the realist theatre of the north. Their place is held by the problem of social conditions and customs. The action of the modern problem play has, for the most part, only two forms. The first is determined by a desire to state the nature of a problem or to attempt its solution. Such a play is M. Brieux' *Les Avariés*, which states the problem of sexual disease and suggests a remedy. The second type of problem drama is concerned first with constructive neatness. Sudermann's *Heimat* (*Magda*) is the example: the problem in this play being no more than so much matter to be presented as effectively as possible. The cleverest of these playwrights attempt a drama which includes both tendencies of the problem-play. Mr Shaw experiments in a new form with partial success, and presents a problem of social or moral import, with considerable wit. There are exceptions to this criticism, even among the realists. Schnitzler, the Austrian dramatist, is one.

It is important to understand the peculiar nature of this problem-action. The crisis of the classic drama, of the Shakespearean drama, of the modern drama in Ibsen and in Strindberg, is at the moment of supreme conflict between a man and destiny, or his own nature, or circumstance, or the acts and traditions of his past. Whatever the conditions of the conflict, it is a personal conflict, the strife of the human spirit. The crisis of the problem drama results from the working of mechanical forces. Vivian Warren is forced to realise all that follows from the nature of her mother's profession. Riches are proved dependent on Widower's Houses. A man marries and his children are discovered to have inherited a disease. Edward Voysey follows out the question of his duty to his father's shady business. Whatever the problem, the action of the play is directed to working it out. The conflict of a man's soul is become a battle of wits. Where there is no problem to be stated or solved, realism sinks further still. It becomes the mechanical record of second-rate people and their lives, without even the poor excuse of an idea to be expounded, a riddle to be solved.

The aristocracy of life, the glory of life is dying in the drama. Action has been degraded to the twistings of impotent or neurotic persons; or at its best to futile struggles over the skeleton of an idea. That which was the strife of man with the gods, of man with fate, of man with mighty passions has become the puny strife of the debating-room, or the correspondence columns of *The Times*. Ibsen caught the uttermost spiritual sense of the dramatic revolt that established this dominant drama of realism. In common with the leaders of every artistic revolt, he has been followed by imitators who reproduce mechanically, trying to see as the master saw, and by camp-followers who exploit the movement. The feeblest of both these classes are those whose drama depends purely on externals, or the result of physical observation. The highest are among those who produce the drama of ideas, the modern problem drama. Among these are at least some who possess, if not spiritual insight, a distinction and power of intellect that gives their drama a value unattainable by the slavish imitator of real life, or the stupid exploiters of disease and hysteria. It is a weary path that leads downward from Strindberg to Mr Masefield, from Ibsen to M. Brieux.

It was not only the dominant drama of realism that felt the impulse of Ibsen's genius. The opposing drama, romantic, symbolist, what you will, sprang into sudden activity. The spirit of the age was Janus-faced. Demanding on the one hand a harsh insistence on the reality of facts, it yet craved the sweets of illusion. Cowardice, fear of life, turned it to hide in romance, in mysticism. The same materialist philosophy and science, the same social doctrines, the same lack of faith that degraded art by offering it a degraded conception of 'reality,' now tempted it to intoxication in a false romance and a shadowy symbolism. When the realist drama followed life into grayness, revolt entered the theatre. From the drabness of imitative realism playwrights fled to paint and powder. *Ghosts* was played at the Théâtre Libre in 1889. In the following year M. Mæterlinck fascinated Paris, and within three years M. Lugné Poë had established the dramatic reaction against realism at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre.

The dangers of the reaction are clear from its commencement. It was a reaction not only against a dramatic form, but against a manner of life. Reaction against the forms of art and life is a sign of strength if to revolt be to transcend and re-create. It is a sign of weakness if it end in dissatisfaction and self-delusion. In this reaction there are both these things. There is a feeble mysticism, neither of God nor man; there is an unrestrained revelling in eccentricity and exoticism; and there is a lack of simplicity and clearness which is due not to over-abundant life, but to exhaustion and mental confusion. Dissatisfaction with false reality is good if it be accompanied by a true conception. Without that it is futile and unproductive, the wailing of a sick man against life itself. Examine the dramatists of this reaction. If you find that in their work there is a falsification of values, a distaste for life; if you find a symbolism expressive of nothing, a mysticism revealing nothing, a romance that is exaggeration of passion and delight in unnatural things; if you find only re-action and no re-creation, no interpretation of life, then it will be clear to you that it is a drama fit only for decadents, for sufferers, and for such as having nothing to give to life, fear and insult it. Make no mistake about it: reality is the soul of art;

not the reality of observed facts, but that highest vision of reality, given only to those masters of life who can so order it that it takes on form and meaning. To this test bring modern realists, romantics, and symbolists; they shall judge themselves.

Oscar Wilde

Before the course of the drama can be followed further along the lines laid down, it is proper to note one dramatist who is an exception to every generalisation in this chapter. *Widowers' Houses* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* belong to the same year. The first is social drama of the barest kind, the prelude to a thousand such plays. A year later *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* headed a procession that still trails its dreary way. A desperate realism was inevitable. And this was the moment that Oscar Wilde chose to perfect in England a dramatic form and content that, outside the work of Dumas *fils* and Sardou, had ended in incompetent bungling. The society drama of Oscar Wilde is the highest of its kind. In technical perfection it surpasses its French models: in subtlety of thought it stands high in modern drama. In the theatre, as in life, one cannot breathe perpetually the air of the heights. The supreme moments of tragedy are a rare experience: so also the divine sanity of high comedy. There must be a secondary drama that demands as little as possible from thought or emotion, while degrading neither. Of this drama Oscar Wilde is the master. Spiritual power there is not in his plays, nor the inspiration that springs from the triumph of a human soul over tragedy. Reminiscences of Dumas *fils* and Sardou there are, and a wit at times wearisome. But he was the master of an artistic comedy when most playwrights were bungling amateurs in a new style; when Mr Shaw was still playing dramatic journalist with *Widowers' Houses* and *Mrs Warren's Profession*. In beauty of construction, in perfection of dialogue, and in artistic truth his work stands higher than any English drama of the past century.

An artist, he never makes use of the tricks of other writers of the secondary drama: indignation, the reform of social evils, psychological discussion. The most soulless dramatic critic can tear no doctrine from his plays. But in easy words, spoken without thought or heart, a phrase, an epigram leaves us peering at the collapse of a social, intellectual, or emotional sham. *An Ideal Husband* is mechanical in construction. But the people that move between the narrow walls of a play modelled on Sardou have depth of feeling and more than a touch of beauty. This play has neither the superficial discussion of Mr Pinero, and of Wilde's French models, nor the aggressive denunciations of the coming realism. Its philosophy ennobles it, such philosophy as there may be in a recognition that self-sacrifice is futile, and hero-worship a form of self-indulgence. The love of good women can be a righteous Moloch, and the secret bitterness of a thousand lives is in Lord Chiltern's plea for a love that is not purblind idolatry.

In these plays the philosopher is slave to the artist. That is as it should be in the secondary drama. Only the great dramatists can make their art philosophic as well as dramatic. Oscar Wilde was too sure an artist to mar his work by stumbling after greatness. So perfect is his self-mastery that he can juggle with forms disdained by those writers of secondary drama who must justify themselves by a curious artistic quality called sincerity. The farce of *The Importance of Being Earnest* permits him a shameless disrespect for the decencies of play-writing. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is no better than the best technical trickery of Sardou. Epigrams, stolen letters, ladies behind doors, help the intrigue through a cheerful improbability. But easy sentiment is absent: here and there is a phrase worth the whole play—'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.' Even in the apprenticeship of this play, and the dramatic froth of the farce, there is the quality that distinguishes his whole work. That is a sense of the theatre, withheld from writers whose plays far surpass his in psychological or poetic power. If we except the *Duchess of Padua*, a dance of puppets, richly clothed, of passions beautiful without truth, Wilde is the past century's master of the theatre.

To this power his finest work adds an originality and sanity of thought that places it above any single production of the realist drama of its time. *A Woman of No Importance* was written in the year of *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* and *Mrs Warren's Profession.* In technique, and in artistic truth, it belongs to another world. It is Oscar Wilde's justification for his disdain of the intellectual and spiritual unrest of his age. In construction and in drawing of character it is the most artistic of his plays. The dramatic interest is not in the intrigue. It is in the rise and fall of the personal forces struggling for the soul of Gerald Arbuthnot. Superficially, it is a comedy of good form, played according to all the rules. On the whole the dialogue and the wit are free from the touch of unreality that marks his other plays. Lord Illingworth talks with Mrs Allonby, whose past is so tantalisingly uncertain. Their phrases are rapier on rapier. No weight of feeling mars the cold charm of their skill. Such emotion as may be necessary to dramatic effect is left to the American's revolt. So complete is the atmospheric illusion that Hester's outburst seems a breaking of all rules. 'You have lost life's secret. Oh, your English society seems to me shallow, selfish, foolish. It has blinded its eyes and stopped its ears. It lies like a leper in purple. It sits like a dead thing smeared with gold.' The dramatic contrast of this western storm with the scene of its fury is subtly drawn. The other women dispose of Hester with perfect tact. The veil descends again, an exquisite veil. Behind it a hint of conflict develops into certainty. Gerald Arbuthnot is offered the post of secretary to Lord Illingworth; it grows slowly more clear that some event in the past has connected his mother and his patron. The revelation comes suddenly when the two meet. 'So that is our son, Rachel.'

After this the action is a struggle between the two for their son. Mrs Arbuthnot dare not give her reason for wishing Gerald to refuse Lord Illingworth's offer: Gerald's irritation grows until with unconscious significance he leaves his mother to go out with Lord Illingworth. The deepening power of his father's influence is suggested with perfect art to the moment when his mother tells him her story as the story of another woman. His comment is drawn straight from the Illingworth philosophic sanity. 'My dear mother, it all sounds very tragic, of course. But I dare say the girl was just as much to blame as Lord Illingworth was. After all, would a really nice girl, a girl with any nice feelings at all, go away from her home with a man to whom she was not married, and live with him as his wife? No nice girl would.' This is the climax of the inner action; and the height of Lord Illingworth's power. From this point it declined. But its decline is as much a matter of inward development as was its rise. There is no intrigue; Lord Illingworth's own nature causes the revelation that loses him the son he wanted. He kisses Hester, who feels outraged. At the sight of Gerald's arm raised against his father Mrs Arbuthnot cries out the truth. So far the action has progressed through the characters of the man and woman. As soon as the external action becomes important, the play loses in dramatic truth and power. Hester is rich, and Gerald's marriage with her saves him from a return to distasteful work. But she is a romantic weakness, a *dea ex machina*, staving off the inevitable—Gerald's slow regret for his lost career as Lord Illingworth's secretary and heir, that would have ended in discontent and alienation from his mother.

With the exception of this weakness, *A Woman of No Importance* is a wonderful play—of its kind. It has intense dramatic interest, its construction is the perfection of porcelain art. With this, it has intellectual value. Its criticism of modern social philosophy has a truth beyond that of most professional criticism. 'Our East-End is a very important problem.' 'Quite so, it is a problem of slavery. And we are trying to solve it by amusing the slaves.'

Mr Kelvil's cant on the necessity for women's purity in politics is solemnly absurd; it is also excellent satire, needed at this moment. The criticism of the play is peculiarly bitter against three forms of cant: the cant about women, the cant of sentiment, the cant of romance. Whatever women may become in the future (and their development will probably be stupendous) their present intellectual development is on the average below that of men. Their claim to equality requires reducing to a demand for forbearance of their efforts. Their interference in the social and political world is distinguished as yet by its quality of emotional uncertainty. They have still to justify themselves before the Illingworth judgment. 'But haven't women got a refining influence?' 'Nothing refines but the intellect.' And later—'Women represent the triumph of matter over mind. . . . The history of woman is the history of the worst form of tyranny the world has ever known. The tyranny of the weak over the strong.'

Selfishness is the lightest sin behind sentiment and romantic stupidity. Gerald's attempt to make his mother marry Lord Illingworth appears as the idiotic want of comprehension it is. His mother's blindness is cleverly suggested. She left Lord Illingworth before Gerald was born, refusing money for herself. Now she refuses for Gerald his chance of success. 'What a typical woman you are! You talk sentimentally, and you are thoroughly selfish the whole time.' And but for an accident her sentimentality would have recognised itself in the mirror of Gerald's ruined happiness.

This play is the measure of Oscar Wilde's dramatic power. It holds also the secret of its limitation. *A Woman of No Importance* treats exquisitely men and women whose artistic and dramatic value depends entirely on the skill of their creator. An impetuous Puritan whose character reveals itself in emotional spasms; a somewhat priggish boy; a romantically selfish woman, once deceived; a fascinating roué; the members of his *cénacle*, male and female: these are its characters. The quality that saves the play from mediocrity is the quality that lifts the whole of Wilde's drama, its intellectual distinction and its sanity. Lord Illingworth thinks clearly on every subject he touches. So does Oscar Wilde. The clear depth of thought in this play is in all of them. Where it is less deep the play is of less interest and power. The originality of his thought is as marked as its clarity: we pass over much to remember—'All thought is immoral. Its very essence is destruction. If you think of anything you kill it. Nothing survives being thought of.'

Because it is concerned with little people, Oscar Wilde's drama is not great. Because it is constructed with exquisite art, because it is subtle in thought, restrained in emotion, sane in outlook, it remains perfect of its kind. And for that it achieves its purpose without the aid of science, sociology, or economics, let us give thanks for an artist in a time when art still shuns the English stage.

His drama is an interlude. The hosts of the new movement passed it by. Strindberg ended the first phase of that movement. Ibsen began the second. Of that second phase, of the reaction, and of the curious fate of the south, there is still much to be said.

CHAPTER IV

I

THE SECOND PHASE OF REALISM IN THE DRAMA.

THE dramatists who came after Ibsen had a very different vision of reality from those realists who preceded him. The writers of the naturalist movement had been content to transfer to the stage scraps of real life. Ibsen made that impossible as a dramatic ideal. But his drama was a drama of realism; and it is with real life that the dominant drama of the past half-century has been concerned. The higher form of realism, as an art of spiritual movement, is beyond the power of all but the greatest dramatists. Hence, those who felt the need of something more than an imitation of life, resorted to an old device for raising the value of their work. They identified it with an attack on the existing conventions, religious, social or intellectual. Ibsen had led the way to the attack: after him came feminists, male and female, dabblers in sociology, in the pathology of sex, and the primitive beauty of village life. The physical necessities and handicaps of commonplace individuals assumed universal importance, and with discussion was developed an æsthetic impotence. John Tanner preaches a doctrine in which a ludicrous seriousness struggles with the pathetic weakness of his obsession; Philip Madras wearies us with his futile hatred of this farm-yard world of sex. The least bemused of the dramatists retained a measure of self-respect and a sense of humour, only to accept the rôle of enlightened journalist, with more or less of wit and insight, and little of dramatic vision. Under their reign flourished the Drama of Ideas.

George Bernard Shaw

Among these we find a place for Mr Shaw, whose claim to it dates from the writing of his first play. With more skill than is accorded to his immediate predecessors or to his followers he has turned to good account the interest simulated in moral and social problems. This he does with a fury of indignation that justifies his plays as magnificent dramatic tracts. His drama is concerned not with men and women in action, but with men and women in relation to an idea of social or moral import. The *motif* of *The Philanderers*? That the woman, even the New Woman, pays; a sufficiently old idea. Of *Mrs Warren's Profession*? The justification in Mrs Warren and in Vivian of duty to self; to which is added an interesting defence of the profession. Of *Arms and the Man*? The destruction of romance by way of Sergius, whose conception of the heroic is destroyed by Bluntschli, and of love, by the help of Louka. There is movement in these plays, intellectual movement, the conflict of mental reaction in relation to theories. The universe presents itself to Mr Shaw's characters as an existing idea, not as a stimulus to action. The dramatic result is a conflict in appearance much like life; but unlike it in that it remains entirely in the sphere of thought, never passing from potential into actual life. The less successful of his plays make crude revelation of the nature of his work. Take the earliest, *Widowers' Houses*. The action of the play is concerned with the rather stupid love affair of a vulgar woman and a commonplace man. There is a usual entanglement: he will not marry her because her father's money is in rotten tenements; in revenge she rejects his repentance. The third act throws her into his arms, or rather, since this is Mr Shaw's play, throws him into hers. A deal of talk on social problems is tacked on to this feeble story. Real appreciation of the problem of poverty there is not. The tenements exist dramatically, partly to help out the plot, partly to give the play an air of modernity.

The same lack of subtlety betrays Mr Shaw in his later work. *Getting Married* is weighted by a long preface. Read the preface first, and observe that in the play the characters work out in their conversation its theories and ideas. The result is a suspicion, fatal to dramatic effect, that Mr Shaw took them aside and gave each a summary of the Shavian faith. The journalist grimaces through the mask of the dramatist.

The drama of ideas may be an excellent thing, though one-sided. It satisfies a phase of human development. and that is no small achievement in drama of the second class. But it must be judged on its craftsmanship, and on the value and permanence of its thought.

In his technique Mr Shaw makes an attempt to break away from the model left by Ibsen. Theoretically, in the words of his people, above all, in the interlude of *Man and Superman*, he seems to realise, as Ibsen never did, the perpetual adaptation of the mind to life. What he failed to realise was that the result to character must be renewed activity. Hence his men and women, though not slaves of heredity and of their past, are in all, save their intellectual life, perfectly ineffectual. He takes an idea, a partial truth, sets it in a conventional society, traces its effect on the conversation and manners of that society, and tests manners and morals by it. The action here is in the mind. The result is that what little movement there may be leads to nothing. For the mind cannot change a man's life unless he has also the power of using knowledge and thought to aid the change. So in *Candida*, where the idea is the same as in *Man and Superman*, that woman is wiser than man in the service of life. In the first act, Eugene, embodying the Idea, forces Morrell to doubt whether he is giving Candida quite as much as he thought. Significantly, the dramatic movement starts from the conversation of the two men. In the second act, Candida's half-careless words chime in with Eugene's protest—'Put your trust in my love for you, James; for if that went I should care very little for your sermons, mere phrases that you cheat yourselves and others with every day.' In the end, Morrell tortures himself into offering Candida a choice between himself and Eugene. He is certainly rather dull and almost priggish, and Candida, declaring him to be the weaker of the two, chooses him accordingly. Neither his weakness, nor the significance of Eugene are dramatically realised. Consequently, both remain half-understood. At the end of the play the situation is where it was. We know that Morrell will be preaching again to-morrow, unchanged, and not even Candida's assertion of her strength shows itself save in her words and the words of others. Yet this is nearer a criticism of life than any other of Mr Shaw's plays, save *Major Barbara*. For the most part, he is content to criticise conditions of life. That is something, and the wit and force of the criticism is even more. But it is after all only a dramatic makeshift. The highest realism criticises life itself, in the progress of a human soul to truth and realisation of the lie that imprisoned it. The spirit of Mr Shaw's drama is his intellectual scorn for the misery and folly of a conventional system of society. In contrast to this system it places an idea of changed and saner conditions. That is all. The minds of his characters have rarely an attitude even of nascent action to the intruding idea. The failure is partly technical:

Mr Shaw lacks dramatic vision. His drama is almost static: none of its characters possess a mind that can create as the idea should have compelled it to create. They see a vision: they can neither make it their own nor realise its value for life. The idea of re-creation is there, but not the power.

Of greater moment than this technical failure is the half-success of Mr Shaw as a thinker. He is obsessed by an indignant hatred of convention. Social evil, marriage, sordid morality, he attacks with the fierce joy of a practised debater. But indignation is not enough as a creative force. Its fury shatters his drama; in the place of unity of character it leaves an anarchy of conflicting opinions. Moreover, Mr Shaw attacks not conceptions of life, but conditions; not faiths, but systems. The taint of the Fabian Society is on his work. It has settled the form of his plays as dramatic tracts, and limited the ideas that his drama reiterates in so many forms. More than all these things, it has swept and garnished the house of his spirit to fit it for the devils of sterile discussion and self-dissatisfaction. For Mr Shaw's philosophy is a philosophy of discontent, and Mr Shaw an excellent and witty iconoclast. His opinions tear his plays to pieces before us. With a single exception, not one of them shows his philosophy in action. Further, they are already suffering by the narrowness of their thought. They please now by their wit and audacity of expression. Their matter is no longer startling: The Revolutionist's Handbook has become an amusing tract. This is as the dramatist himself would have prophesied, but it is none the less dramatic failure. Partly it is due to the indifference to 'problems' that has descended upon us: partly to use. Take his attack upon the conception of marriage. To-day one half the world is convinced that marriage as an institution is a failure, and will cheerfully endorse all he can say: while the other half claims a further advance in thought by insisting on the hard nobility of living up to the conventional code. Where wit and spirit fail, Mr Shaw's plays fail now. So *Misalliance,* which placed his weaknesses in the strongest light: his love of the debating society, his sterility of ideas, his imperfect craftsmanship.

Stronger than all else in the Shavian tradition is the belief in the dramatist's clarity of thought. Mr Shaw's intellect is of a high order. He is probably the cleverest of contemporary dramatists. But his thought remains clear only so long as it restricts itself to a judgment of society. When it attempts a philosophy of life it becomes confused and halting. Take, as supreme example of his intellectual strength and weakness, the interlude in *Man and Superman.* Here is wit, here scorn of cowardice and sham romance: the romance of chivalry, service by 'devils who will serve you from sheer love of servitude, and magnify your importance for the sake of dignifying their service'; and the romance of sex love and marriage. Here, too, is a conception of life as possessed of purpose and creative consciousness. But here also is fixed the limit of Mr Shaw's great intellectual power and of his dramatic vision. 'What I have always wanted,' he wrote, 'is a pit of philosophers; and this is a play for such a pit.' Judge then whether it is fit for philosophers, or for the pseudo-philosophers of the amateur debating room. The Devil is a consistent study. He is Schopenhauer and his defeat is the defeat of Schopenhauer's refuge in Nirvana or in resignation. The Devil's code is drawn from his: life is necessarily war; therefore let us eat, drink, and be merry.

But Don Juan is a bungler. He has the vision of a Life-force, striving to become self-conscious, whose purpose is its 'darling object—brains.' At the same time it carries on the race by throwing the philosopher into a woman's arms 'as a sailor throws a scrap of fish into the mouth of a sea-bird.' To help the Life-force in its haphazard selection, Don Juan proposes what he calls 'that great central purpose of breeding the race, ay, breeding it to heights now deemed superhuman.' In short, he will arm Life with the principles of eugenics. But can any theory be stronger than a passion that throws man into woman's arms as 'a scrap of fish into the mouth of a sea-bird'? Don Juan is the confutation of his own philosophy. Himself, he first shirked life, and then gave way to impulse. As a philosopher sterile, because as a man he acted instinctively, and without hope of directing his impulse. The philosopher talks of conscious creation; the man creates anyhow. How the one may serve the other is not suggested, save in the prophecy of a reaction to eugenics. The conception of a purpose in life, half-seen, is lost. It becomes little more than our old friend—*Unaquæque res, quantum in se est, in suo esse persevare conatur*, dragged out until the very devil protests. Eugenics to master life! The mind staggers before anti-climax. The failure is one of confused thought. Don Juan held half a truth. He knew, a little dimly, that man's desire for power is greater than his will to live. He dreamed of humanity subduing life to its service. For that, man needs an ideal beyond scientific breeding, a new mind and a new conception of spiritual value. Else will the purpose of life, the strife of humanity, end in chaos, its will to create consciously become woman's instinct to create somehow, man himself hindering life by shirking creation. But these things Don Juan did not know.

This is the philosophic failure of *Man and Superman*. Its dramatic failure is like unto it. In the interlude, the dramatist fumbles after a conception of man's will-to-assist-Life in its effort for purposive movement. In the play, the character of Tanner is dominated by a will-to-die-out. His failure is a double one. At first sight he would seem to be an attempt at the Siegfried of Mr Shaw's *Perfect Wagnerite*. 'The most inevitable dramatic conception, then, of the nineteenth century, is that of a perfectly naïve hero upsetting religion, law, and order in all directions, and establishing in their place the unfettered action of humanity doing exactly what it likes, and producing order instead of confusion thereby because it likes to do what is necessary for the good of the race.' Tanner certainly effects a clearance that looks a little like order. But all that he has done is to set up the worn-out forms of faith, bowl them over by his wit and plain speaking, and kick them behind the curtain. Very exhilarating, but hardly sufficient for the establishment of a new order. In the conduct of his life he fails with ignominy. Behind his words is the spirit of a German madman. 'A new will I teach man: to will that way that man hath gone blindly, and to call it good, and no longer to slink aside from it like the sickly and the dying.' His deeds confess his weakness. He is dissatisfied, and his dissatisfaction is born of impotence. He desires to shirk life, with an instinctive repugnance to it that is the mark of the decadent. At the end he is defeated, the more utterly because he is not big enough to see over the top of sex. He is a weakling, full of words, guilty of the last philosophic sin, the regarding sexual love as of supremely dominant importance. The failure of the interlude is glorious; the failure of the drama an ignominious defeat.

The same technical weakness and superficial philosophy weakens Mr Shaw's study of character. In the creation of his men and women, he has spent much wit and little humour; much mockery and little irony; much keenness of intellect and less lasting truth; little beauty, much analysis, and hardly anything of inspiration. Call the scenes of his plays before you. What is it that springs first from your memory? A clear vision of personality, of men and women who live by the vitality and truth of their presentment? Or a sally of wit, a flash from his quick intellect? What does the first thought of *Man and Superman* recall? The speeches of the Devil and Don Juan at an infernal debating society, with the conviction that devil and philosopher are equally well fitted to lead a popular debate, to serve thereby as much useful purpose, discover as much of the actual state of things, and render as great service to the cause of truth and clear vision as such debates are wont to do. *John Bull's Other Island?* Variations on an old theme—English misunderstanding of Ireland. *Candida*—continued assertions of the lady's indispensable services to humanity. *Misalliance*—Does the thought of *Misalliance* recall anything to your mind at all? So throughout the list: it is not his men and women that we remember, but the ideas with which he has bedecked them; not character, but words; not personality, but the wrappings of personality. Hence, at the last, it is by their ideas that his characters live. They criticise not life, but habits of life. They are of to-day in their words and of yesterday in their deeds. To-morrow the ideas will have lost their keenest interest, are losing it now. In modern drama, Mr Shaw's people remain the most vivid portrayal of contemporary follies: would they were as true for the new life as they have been for that of their own time.

To this criticism there is one exception, one character only that belongs to the outer ring of the immortals, by virtue of its unity and the implicit criticism on life which it embodies.

Andrew Undershaft is a dramatic creation, wrought of the flesh and blood of the dramatist. *Major Barbara* has the inspiration of a religion. 'Money and gunpowder, freedom and power; command of life and command of death.' The faith that moves it is older than the hills and as new as to-day's dawn. All freedom, personal and social, is at the call of power. The escape from slavery beneath power has always been death. Death is itself the last weapon of power. Whether the inspiration comes from God or the Devil, there it certainly is. By its impulse Mr Shaw has written a play, great because it surrounds a personality created in one of the strongest faiths of humanity. In his drama there are no others. There are many rebels, but they are all impotent, speaking unconventionally, and acting as befits English gentlemen. This may be a master stroke of irony, but it does not make for the highest drama. Mr Shaw's men and women fail to impress; but not because they are less complex than those with whom we deal in the world. For in a measure they are complex. And save in some few instances, they are not in any sense moved by the ordinary stage passions. But neither by temperament nor dramatic training is their author fitted to call forth more than one side of their complexity. He fails in presenting them as free men and women to be judged on their merits, possessing neither the sympathy nor the technical skill to shape them into unity.

At the end his praise is high. At least he hammered on the doors of modernity in the drama, before middle-class and Fabian respectability received him. In *The Sanity of Art* he has written things true of Art and others true of his own drama. 'The great artist is he who goes a step beyond the demand, and by supplying works of a higher beauty and a higher interest than have yet been perceived, succeeds, after a brief struggle with its strangeness, in adding this fresh extension of sense to the heritage of the race.' From this high gift to life his drama turns aside. But none the less it serves. The sanity of his thought is a thing to praise God for in this time. On the whole, he has treated sexual love as the intermittent passion it is. He has spoken aloud of the tyranny of woman's weakness. He has hated our cowardice, denounced the indifference that has for highest ambition 'to be hurt by nobody,' and scornfully exposed the 'sheer imaginative debauchery' of forcible romance. And for the sake of the much wit in which he clothed his ideas, good and bad alike, much may be forgiven him. It has echoes of Oscar Wilde's epigrammatic nonchalance. The conversation of Tanner and Straker, of William and the twins in *You Never Can Tell*, conversation wherein philosophy and wit are rampant, is very like Algernon Moncrieff talking to Lane, or Lord Goring handing epigrams to Phipps. The Shavian defier of convention—in words—has his counterpart in the plays of Wilde, with the difference that the former is bravely defying social custom, and the latter is outside it by virtue of an aristocratic indifference which gives him the palm for grace. It is curious that England's justification of her dramatic existence during the past century should rest on Irish wit.

At the end, Mr Shaw's plays remain the apotheosis of the 'drama of ideas.' The intellect that criticises not only customs, but in the interlude of *Man and Superman* attempts to criticise humanity and life, is the supreme power of his drama. That, and the scorn of deceit and injustice beneath which our cowardice has shrunk, are his claims to greatness. His words shall be the final judgment of his best work. 'Art should refine our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our self-knowledge, self-control, precision of action and considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity.' It is not a little thing that such words can be spoken of his drama.

From the worst fate of the platform dramatist Mr Shaw is saved by his wit and intellect and a measure of clear sight in his vision of humanity. Without these qualities there is no dramatic justification for the playwright who uses the theatre as an adjunct to the Eugenics Society or the Reform of the Poor Law. M. Brieux has been able in his work to fall into every danger that besets the path of playwrights who can give their drama no other interest save what is accorded to the spectacle of misery and sin. True, the stage provides the most effective means for propaganda. Lectures and sermons are far less impressive than the sight of disease and folly stalking naked in the theatre. Having granted so much, we demand that the writers of such plays say honestly of their work—'This is not a work of art: it is a tract on the evils of forced motherhood, set forth with as much skill in the arrangement of scenes as I possess.' That would at least advise dabblers in sociology that in such a theatre they might find support for their theories. There also they would find those who like to have their fancy tickled by the discussion of sexual disease and sexual needs. They would not find either artists or lovers of the drama. Such frankness would have done justice to M. Brieux' sincerity as a reformer; but it would not have made him an Academician.

Brieux

In the whole of his work there is not one character that deserves the title of dramatic creation. There is not one play that is more than an exploitation of personal or social failure. He has treated of almost every form of social evil, and debased his art by his treatment. His technique is most faulty in the study of character. The men and women of his plays do not reveal themselves through their words. For that, their speech should be in perfect accord with the slow unfolding of their character, no word superfluous or without significance. The dialogue of M. Brieux' plays is rather the description, translated into the first person, that a novelist might have given of his characters, a novelist addicted to commonplace language and the vicious cliché. Hence we realise them, if at all, very imperfectly. So in *Maternité*. Here, in spite of moments of genuine feeling not one character is a dramatic whole. One and all, they are the lay figures of the lecturer. The death of Annette affects the action as little as her life, and the play loses itself in a violent assertion of a woman's right to limit her family. Significantly enough, in the final version of the play, M. Brignac has become the victim of alcoholism.

M. Brieux' best work is never free from the rhetoric of the popular lecturer. *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont* has the elements of drama. Among the usual herd of commonplace characters is one with something of spiritual distinction. Though we are never permitted to realise how fine she is, Julie impresses us as worth saving. The sense of her misery in a society of petty swindlers is half-suggested, and for a brief time she achieves the fullest reality. She has a passionate love for children, and her husband will have none. Her protest and her anguish are the play's moment of greatness. But the subject is too great for M. Brieux. Shortly Julie disappears: in her place is a feminist lecturer. Nor is she ever again real, save perhaps in her final resignation. The dramatist has wrecked a fine play. Julie is not the only character spoiled by her author's unfortunate love of his own rhetoric Lucie, Madelaine, Annette in *Maternité* are with her. They are never realised, never held in the dramatist's vision. It is to M. Brieux' credit that he chooses, sometimes, great themes. It is his failure that he cannot handle them. He lacks the power of personality, the dramatic imagination, to lift his work above polemics to the height of a criticism for all time. He has treated of painful things, and left them merely painful. The great artists, treating of them, have given them beauty of form and spirit, shaping them in full realisation of their pain and evil, and ennobling them until they become the triumph of the human spirit. It is significant that so many of the figures of M. Brieux' tragedies have submitted to social circumstance. Julie and Lucie married partly for the sake of children, partly because they dare not face loneliness and hardship. The forces against them are strong, but in their submission they are none the less slaves, great only in so far as they have revolted. The greater strength of Julie is her greater distinction. Her protest is more articulate; and as a consequence her dramatic value higher.

M. Brieux began his dramatic career with a very mild play under the revolutionary banner. He has continued it along the same lines. His ideas are not more original than their form. There are suggestions of a great conception in one or two plays. Beyond that there is little thought, orthodox or revolutionary, throughout his drama. There is a shameless exploitation of pathological science ; exploitation only, not dramatic treatment. Take *Les Avariés*, an incredible production. That lectures on syphilis must be given, let us grant, but in the name of drama, never. Pain, horror and disease, the shame of forced childbirth, anything of human significance, anything capable of distinctive treatment is fit subject for drama, so that its treatment ennoble life, not merely depreciate. But let it be drama, an expression of personality, not a confused and haphazard lecture.

Even when we remember his tracts on sexual disease, M. Brieux is a lamb who has no business in the revolutionary pack. He is, indeed, an advanced old maid who believes in the feminist movement, possesses a fund of platitudes, a passion for reform, and a total incapacity to rise above the level of the platform orator. What social evil has he not treated?—working class education in *Blanchette*; political corruption in *L'Engrenage*; betting among the lower classes in *Le Resultat des Courses*; the injustice of law in *La Robe Rouge*; sexual disease in *Les Avariés*—can M. Brieux believe the stage to be an extension of the various societies which exist for the distortion of the truth? Alas, he is undoubtedly sincere: he believes that the unconvincing nonentities of his drama will force attention to the diseases of society. He is a well-meaning person, at times a fair playwright: but he has no creative genius. What is to be said of *Les Bienfaiteurs*, which solves a problem of riches and poverty by the orthodox platitudinal method? 'Le devoir, c'est donc d'enfermer l'aumône dans une poignée de main. Il faut faire la charité avec discernement.' This is just a little below the level of a young Fabian treating of the Poor Law. What of *Les Hannetons*, problem of free love? Pierre and Charlotte are a plebeian couple, tiresome babblers of nothing. The whole action of the play turns on the stupid quarrels of these two stupid people. The plot belongs to the triangular order: it is more disagreeable than is usual, utterly devoid of wit or any sense of proportion. If the play be intended to prove that free love is not happier than married licence, it is not proved by the particular case. Moreover, it is not worth proving. The sexual arrangements of two ordinary people are not of the least importance.

Pierre is a bore; Charlotte is a liar, sensual, hysterical, capable of the last meanness of a perfectly safe 'suicide.' When children are in question, the matter becomes important to the State, possibly to the philosopher. But the 'advanced,' a pitiable crew, rarely face the responsibility of children. Pierre and Charlotte do not; and that fact destroys the play's last feeble reason for existence as a drama of ideas.

Without great characters, or constructive beauty, or wit, or deep thought, the interest of M. Brieux' drama depends entirely on its use of social and personal evils. In two at least of his plays, in *Maternité*, and in *Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont*, he has attempted great things. As a dramatist he has failed, because he has treated them as a lecturer. His people do not embody the wrong and the misery he depicts, do not reveal themselves in a fierce reaction against circumstance. They do not develop at all, but behind their wrapping of rhetoric remain shadows. A dramatist insults the spectators of his plays by an assumption that the horrors of hereditary disease are only clear to them when delivered through the mouth of a doctor; and not when they are seen, as in *Ghosts*, in the high light of action. When all is said, the fact remains that the drama is not a medicine to stimulate a jaded appetite. That one type of play excites lower passions, does not justify the writing of dramatic lectures on the evils of sex. To the artist, it is only permissible to create fine characters whose conflict with themselves and their surroundings lifts the pain of such evils to tragic power. He may not make lantern-slide courses of them. That is the work of the non-artistic mind; the mind that produced *Les Avariés*.

The failure of M. Brieux is partly a temperamental failure. He had not the power of personality to create finely. It is the failure of most social theorists turned dramatist. One playwright reformer, with great intellectual power, fails by the sterility of his thought: that is Mr Shaw. Another fails because he has not the least conception of dramatic art or imagination: that is M. Brieux. There is another way of failure. It is due to a lack of that subtle quality of dramatic vision which enables a dramatist so to control and direct his personality, and so to shape his theme that a work of art emerges from the chaotic mass of feelings and ideas.

Frank Wedekind

This is the failure of Frank Wedekind, the German playwright. Power of personality he has, and a capacity for insulting his public almost equal to that of the hero in his *Hidalla.* Karl Hetmann calls a meeting to propound the ideals of an 'International Society for the Breeding of a New Race.' He delivers a lecture on the physical degeneration of his audience, and the audience is annoyed and hurls itself at him. Hetmann was a fanatic, with a fanatic's dangerous sincerity. Wedekind is such another: behind the crudity of his utterance is a force of moral conviction that shatters form and tradition. The crudest of his work reveals a personal power, to which he cannot give dramatic form. He struggles, and the effect is sometimes ludicrous, as in *Hidalla,* sometimes painful, as in *Oaha.* The violence of his passions appears as meaningless as if it were merely an effort to simulate passion. Whatever the theme of his play, Wedekind flings himself at it with a fury of conviction, tears it to pieces, and exhibits the mangled corpse as evidence of his strength. In the one instance when he succeeds in controlling himself in the service of art, he justifies his presence in the theatre. *Frühlings Erwachen* is a tragedy, the tragedy of children spoilt by the silence of parents and teachers on the facts of physical life. The finest of them suffer most. Melchior has power of intellect, quick imagination. A schoolfellow commits suicide because he has failed in his examination, and among his papers is found an explanation of physical love given him by Melchior. Melchior is condemned to the degradation of a reformatory. Wendla, who possessed both charm and the promise of nobility, dies in childbirth, leaving her mother the agony of regret for her silence and cowardice. There is no coherence in the action. It is a series of dramatic episodes that just escape drama; one of them, the churchyard scene, falls hardly short of the highest kind of fantasy. The feelings of the children at this time in their life are suggested with a dramatic skill of which Wedekind is elsewhere quite incapable. The conversation of the boys is throughout wonderfully good. Their imagination and intellect seize on everything, questioning, destroying, with the power of a fresh vitality. Life, new creative activity, is the force behind the play, lifting it beyond the painful to the tragic. In the separate episodes a beauty of form struggles with chaotic inspiration. Only Wedekind's failure to master his theme completely, to shape it into a perfect unity of form and spirit sets *Frühlings Erwachen* below great tragedy. It is his one drama. The rest are formless, undramatic. The critic who dubbed him Frau Nietzsche spoke better than he knew. At times, the Nietzschean philosophy has on Wedekind precisely the effect it would have on an excitable and unbalanced woman. He delivers it in shrieks.

These three dramatists, Shaw, Brieux, and Wedekind, used the dramatic formula of realism to embody their passion for reform. There are others more disinterested. While still making use of 'reality' they do so in the name of sincerity. The dramatic motive of their work is not indignation: they deal peaceably with life, thought and emotion as they know them. Under this heading fall playwrights of widely differing natures, alike only in that their work is limited to a personal vision of 'real life.'

Galsworthy

Take, as the first representative of these honest men, Mr Galsworthy. His plays treat of social questions: but they treat of them as significant incidents in modern life, incidents regarded by the dramatist as worthy of artistic treatment. Hence there is in his drama no harshness of protest, no fever of anger. We pass from the drawing-room to the wretched dwelling of the charwoman; from thence to the police-court where the scales of justice are weighted by the cunning bought with gold. None is judged: neither magistrate, nor prisoner, nor the authority behind the law. Yet the disorder that is Society is for once made plain, its hidden workings revealed. We realise that even the drawing-room must hear the sound of Mrs Jones's children crying at the area rails; and we know that their faint wail is but the dim foreboding of a shout that shall one day defy the thickness of the shutters.

Beyond that, another vision rises from the chaos. *The Silver Box* revealed the machinery of a social system. In *Justice* its spirit stands self-condemned. If Mr Galsworthy blames neither prison authorities nor judge, nor any of those who sent Falder to ruin, it is because he knew them but types of the common human sort. Good fellows all, lack of understanding, lack of coherent purpose, keep them for ever parts of the machine. They do their duty by the system to which they themselves submit. Nevertheless, impartial study though it be, *Justice* is their warning, one of the hundred warnings that to-day make vain appeal. These are the voice: after them come the deed and the being. Not all the unslackening pressure of Falder's disaster overbears the unspoken word. *On you who to-day hold power in this land, who* *control the forces of life, is laid the burden of choice. Under the weight of your justice, man the immortal is blindly crushed, his heirship of the ages become the life of a brute. Were your Courts of Justice Courts of Humanity how many of you would stand in the dock, charged with the greatest sin, the degradation of humanity. Yours is the power to strike blindly; or, lest they and you perish together, yours to marshal the mechanical forces which now you use so poorly.* Not men, but men's justice; not society, but the spirit of society are revealed, and in the revelation, self-valued.

Mr Galsworthy is not original; he is merely faithful to his vision of life: not inspired, but thoughtful: not imaginative, but only truthful. He has gone to the hovel, the business office and the police court for life. Others have done the same and found there only the sweepings of worn-out souls. He found some dim knowledge of the spirit of humanity, some sense of the need for a purpose in life. That is the saving of his drama. But for that *Justice* would be the story of a defaulting clerk, without lasting interest, without artistic value. As it is, the counsel for the defence is the articulate spirit of art in the play, gathering together and interpreting the threads of action and speech, else meaningless and incoherent. Where there is no such voice, Mr Galsworthy's work is without value, superficial in its interest. *The Eldest Son* is a story of second-rate people and their social problems, problems without importance and without general truth. *The Fugitive* is the story of a dissatisfied wife, who, being too much of a lady to work and live, poisons herself in a café. Both these plays are concerned only with 'facts of life' and people of little distinction. They are accordingly weak as drama, which is concerned with truth and the subordination of life to the limits of art. His perception of this higher drama is Mr Galsworthy's success. His devotion to the inartistic ideal of reproducing real life is his weakness. This made *Justice* fail of the tragic. Falder is a weak-willed slave to life. His death is without power or beauty; it succeeds only in rousing pity, the sterile pity we feel for the unfortunates we put in poorhouses or homes. The power of the play is in the speech for the defence.

Mr Galsworthy's realism has no value: his passing visions of reality have not a little. So also has the peculiar honesty of his dramatic method. Without effort after effect, or reliance on non-dramatic interests, he has produced plays of no mean power and no common insight into the heart and brain of the social system. And he has written one great play.

Strife is the dramatic form of the modern class spirit. Again, the conception is not original. M. Mirabeau attempted it. Hauptmann caught a part of its significance. Mr Galsworthy has given it a form nearer perfection. Antony, the employer, and Roberts, the strike leader, face each other in a struggle of which the nature is still but half-understood. It is the struggle, confused by passion and fear, between the power that would degrade labour to the level of a machine, more or less well cared for, and the power that would lift it into conscious responsibility and spiritual self-possession. Neither side is wholly noble—still less wholly ignoble. *Strife* is one of a very few dramas of modern life written since 1890. It is the problem of to-day and of to-morrow. More, it is good drama, well-constructed, the interest sustained, the power intensified by its restraint. Like all Mr Galsworthy's work, there is little of imaginative beauty in it, little of a triumphant sense of life. But there is in it the strength of conviction, and the vision, limited though it be, that is his kinship with modernity. At the end his dramatic virtues, like his vices, are negative. He does not create life: neither does he falsify nor depreciate what knowledge he has of it. He has no meaning for all time: yet he has interpreted to-day. He cannot inspire, but at least he has not depressed.

Hauptmann

Take now Gerhart Hauptmann. Mr Galsworthy's impartial serenity is in sharp contrast with the changing vision of the German dramatist. Hauptmann, faithful throughout to himself and his conceptions of life and art, has never quite caught hold of reality, or of realism, which is the secondary playwright's formula for reality. He has written plays in many forms; one play after the fashion of Zola; a rather feeble imitation of Ibsen; social drama; one of those comedies so harsh that they rouse every bitter feeling; a drama of fantasy; a drama of poetry.

For beyond everything else, Hauptmann is a poet. Not only in the imaginative beauty of *Die Versunkene Glocke,* but in the subtle delicacy of all his work. He creates atmosphere, but he does it by methods permissible only to the poet or the prose artist. The descriptions of nature that precede some of his scenes are exquisite in the reading. They are lost on the stage. The reiteration, the light touches in his dialogue, convey the spirit of his thought and his characters to the reader. They are not fit for transmission to the spectator. The subtle sense that the great dramatists have in perfection, the sense of the theatre, Hauptmann has not at all. He has not mastered his tools. In consequence, the people of his plays, ill at ease in the theatre, do not get beyond the footlights. And since the dramatist serves not all art, but the art of the stage, Hauptmann's plays, for all their delicacy of touch, and imaginative truth, must rank as dramatic failures. His latest work has wandered still further from the stage, its dramatic value grown so small that it can no longer serve the theatre.

Hauptmann's essential power is the originality of thought that has spoiled him as a writer of good 'acting' plays of little artistic value, but with the elements of popular success. He fails most utterly where he stumbles after the achievements of greater men. Where he stands alone his work has at least the beauty of an intuitive conception, though its realisation in dramatic form be faulty. In *Das Friedenfest* he attempts a study of heredity, solving the problem with a sort of hesitating originality. But the result is a feeble suggestion of Ibsen. In *Einsame Menschen* he follows Ibsen into psychological study, again not as a mere copyist. But his men and women are garrulous shadows. They talk of themselves until they disappear behind a veil of words. They alienate sympathy as well as interest by their persistent refusal to act reasonably or firmly. John Vockerat is an irritable neurotic, and as stupid as he is wearisomely unreal. Whatever dramatic purpose might have been served by a vision of the loneliness in which every human being passes his intimate life, is lost in this family of commonplace babblers.

These imitative efforts after the problem drama fail, but as soon as Hauptmann writes of a life and a people real to him, he succeeds. *Die Weber* is a drama without central characters or formal action. The brutish misery of the weavers, their almost inarticulate discontent, insensibly pass into the intolerable. Then comes their blind upheaval and the purposeless fury of their pillage. They have no plans, they are incapable of suggesting any lifting of their class. The drama draws near supreme power and pity up to the wrecking of Dreissiger's house. After that it ends in the inconclusive way of a tempest; leaving nothing behind but a tale of misery, incredible poverty, and aimless destruction. The depth of feeling, the power of suggestion and the restraint in his description of the weavers' sufferings make this, out of all Hauptmann's social plays, a drama possessing some quality of sublimity. It is a cry from the abyss. It is almost a new dramatic form.

It is significant of Hauptmann's artistic uneasiness that he never attempted to develop the artistic experiment of *Die Weber.* He passed on to other dramatic forms. In spite of much grace and some power, each falls short of achievement. He tried a dream play. *Hannele* places scenes of brutal realism in a Pauper Refuge side by side with the shifting imagery of a child's delirious imagination. In spite of some psychological subtlety, in spite of its poetic moments, the play draws dangerously near a suggestion of the cinematograph. In consequence, its dramatic power is almost destroyed. As in this, so in every play that has followed it, technical weakness leaves the characters shadowy, the action unreal. Insight, artistic subtlety, imagination, all are there; but these gifts cannot lift his work from a poetic half-success to dramatic greatness. *Die Versunkene Glocke* is characteristic of the peculiar quality of his work. Shadowy forms from the dim land of Teutonic folklore stand behind the characters of this play ; it holds the moist scent in the depth of the woods, the mocking sense of uncouth, inhuman powers that assails the man attempting their night fastness. It is kin to the inmost spirit of the German tradition, half-fantastic, half held to a misty philosophy of the ideal. Like that philosophy, it is not to be touched with harsh fingers, lest its iridescent veil turn to the damp cobwebs that hang round thick undergrowth. Withal, it is a joyous play, in Heinrich's passing triumph, in its delight in the creatures of woods, hills, and wells. But at the end it is a play of weakness;

a dead hand pulls Heinrich back to humanity, from the elusive vision that dies in one final flash of light. More than any play it is significant of Hauptmann's genius, the work of a dreamer turned dramatist, a poet fighting for his art with a harsh mistress. Hauptmann is not a dramatist. He is rather a sign for his age. In its constant effort after new forms, in its faithful search for the inspiration of life, and in its restlessness his drama is a half-way house between this age and the one that comes. He is not alone in his promise for the future. Realism in Germany is failing. Probably it never passed very deep into the national spirit. When all is said there is nothing the mind of the Teuton hates more than bare facts. It has peopled his forests with elves and water-sprites, his hills with gnomes who burrow in the earth. It has woven a covering of speculative philosophy round the finest of his literature. It is the most obstinate of all minds that worship the great Abstract. And somewhat after the fashion of the elephant, it can do the most fantastically delicate things in his art. Already the German audience is repenting of its half-hearted allegiance to the drama of realism and revolt against tradition. The attempt of Reinhardt to weave action, setting, and music into a rhythmical whole is the clearest sign of the new spirit. One less definite, but as full of meaning, is the quick interest in classic drama, in Shakespeare, in the older writers of Germany, Schiller, Goethe, Lessing, and Kleist.

But alongside the vigorous work of the scenic artists and artist-producers the old commercial theatre roots itself in Germany more firmly. Life is ebbing from the drama into the work of producing more subtle and more beautiful stage settings. The German theatre triumphs through the handful of artists and directors who are perfecting the means of interpreting drama. Playwrights themselves are producing nothing worthy of interpretation. There is a demand for sensible plays. 'Let us be men,' said the parrot in the Hans Andersen tale. And the plays of Otto Ernst are all of manly men and womanly women. Johan Raff imagines an artist, Giovanni, repelled by his wife's coldness. She tried to win him back by changing from an iceberg to a furnace. The obstinate man will not be melted! He is hardened, and turns from her in disgust. It would have been better if she had kept her heat for baking bread.

This want of vigour among the dramatists persists in spite of an attempt to create interest in plays or historic and classical themes. Stucken has written a series on the legend of the Grail, but his characters are hollow statues that move stiffly in a dead world. In *Der Zoom des Achilles* Wilhelm Schmidtbonn insists on the right of the Fatherland to demand any sacrifice of desire or pride. This play, poor enough in dramatic work, is a curious witness to the strength of the Hegelian tradition. Pity if that dead hand should reach any farther into the theatre, since its gifts to the drama can only be impotence and the negation of dramatic conflict.

Among modern German dramatists, Hauptmann remains the most significant figure. He typifies the confused search for new forms, new artistic conceptions. In his work, as in the attempt of Reinhardt, and the scattered efforts of a few theatres, there is no lack of creative imagination. But Hauptmann cannot ride the tempest. That is left for a dramatist who adds mastery over his craft and sureness of dramatic vision to imaginative power and harmony.

The two dramatists whose work we have taken as instances of a faithful treatment of reality have one thing in common. They are part of the movement of revolt and they have learned of Ibsen. But they have attempted to do more than follow the lines marked out by his drama. There were others who, with no originality of thought, and little creative imagination, did not yet fall into bungling imitation after the style of the *Second Mrs Tanqueray*. Influenced by Ibsen, able to appreciate him, they yet remained faithful to their traditional idea of playwriting. They write what may be commercially designated as solid acting plays, treating real life with respect as an honourable institution.

Hervieu

Take, for example, one of the older dramatists of France. Take M. Hervieu. At times the closeness of his construction scarcely leaves his characters room to breathe. The result is the mechanical excitement of *L'Enigme*, where two husbands know that the wife of one is unfaithful, but cannot discover which, until the sensational *dénouement*. But M. Hervieu does better than this. *Le Dédale* may stand as a fair instance of his best work. There are some of the old tricks of construction: at the beginning it is necessary for M. Vilard-Duval to relate the story of Marianne's divorce to the man who wishes to marry her. The action of the play is arranged with average skill. Marianne marries for the second time Guillaume de Breuil. She does so against the will of her mother, who refuses to regard her as made free by her divorce. Her marriage is happy, until her first husband, Max, comes to claim their little son. She gives him up for half the year. He falls ill while he is with Max and she hurries to nurse him. There in the house where she lived with Max, the old passion, never dead, leaps into open flame. She realises that she is bound irrevocably to the father of her child, and returns to him. Afterwards, confession to Guillaume, vows to live apart from both, and at the end the death of the two men in a struggle. The curtain drops on a touching scene of motherly affection.

Apart from its measure of technical honesty, the play has some depth of feeling and power in the dialogue. The influence of Ibsen is clear in Marianne's revolt against her mother's hard faith. But in the development of the action, Hervieu the solid playwright gets much the better of Hervieu the student of Ibsen's spiritual movement. There are scenes which show no common knowledge of humanity, and scenes of emotional power. The characters are not puppets, but neither are they revealed as spiritual types. They are sincerely drawn, to the limit of the dramatist's power. What would you? M. Hervieu is a faithful workman—let us praise God therefor. Judged from the standpoint of the new age, his plays recede into the background of the transitory. Even as play-maker his power is uneven. *Le Dédale* is his finest play, but after a certain point it quite loses hold on reality. That is the punishment of a limited vision. When Guillaume hurries away to kill Max, thereby losing his last chance of distinction, the action sinks into melodrama. Letters and signals go astray; Guillaume offers a worthless sacrifice. The scene where both men claim Marianne as wife is near bathos, and their fall over the cliff the only way out of this domestic confusion. The appeal of the play is emotional, and the ragged guise of an appeal to the intellect only confuses the issue. Moreover, these people are not capable of genuine tragedy. Max is the 'average sensual man' of feminist imagination; Marianne is capable of considerable emotion and much less thought; Guillaume is a shadow. Hence when tragedy descends on them they fade into an exaggerated unreality. Marianne's agonies leave us as cold as the final tableau of mother-love. All are caught in the net of their past actions, suffer, and are punished. Had they been greater, their deeds might have lifted the play to better things, for it lacks neither feeling nor technical skill. But they are bourgeois in soul. After marrying a second man to save herself from loneliness, Marianne flings herself into the arms of her divorced husband in the old sort of bedroom scene. And it is sexual passion again that drives home the truth of her allegiance to the father of her child. In short, the play is an acting success and a dramatic failure.

I have dwelt on it at such length because it is so excellent an instance of the insufficiency of sincere workmanship applied to an inferior subject. Its motive is sexual passion. That, as sole motive for a play, lends itself to two methods of treatment: the cheerfully mocking and the heartily romantic. The first method, at its best, has produced the work of Schnitzler; to the second we owe *Romeo and Juliet*, magnificent apotheosis of the Love romantic, the Love poetic, the Love incredible. When inferior and uncritical dramatists take sexual passion as sole motive of their work it becomes melodrama or a reliable acting play of bourgeois interest. M. Hervieu has mingled these latter methods. He cannot go beyond the solid qualities of the bourgeois play, but he is far above mere melodrama. He has thought much, but he is not inspired, nor can he inspire others. In this play is no mechanical intrigue, little calculated sensation. But also there is nothing, nothing at all, either in depth of thought, in emotional intensity, in power of personality, to give the play distinction and lasting reality. It is not a play for modernity, since modernity demands above all things that her work shall stand the test of the past and be true for the future.

M. Hervieu's work is typical of much in modern drama. It is impossible to pass by its evident sincerity of intention; it is impossible also to ignore the littleness of its achievement, little because it is concerned with little people, whose passions and sufferings can be

'*Crainquebille*'

of no value to life or art. Turn from this stolid mediocrity to the realism of another French dramatist whose plays are few. At once the essential inferiority of such work as M. Hervieu's, thoughtful and sincere though it be, becomes painfully apparent. M. Anatole France has written trivial plays after the fashion of *Au Petit Bonheur*, distinguished only by a certain insight, and an easy, cultured style. He has written also one comedy of high quality. *Crainquebille* is a piece of exquisite genre art. It is also a small masterpiece of irony. Crainquebille is an old man selling vegetables and fruit from a hand-cart. He pauses in the street while a woman returns to her shop for the money she owes him. Police Agent 64 moves him on: he protests: a sou is a sou, and he is an exact man. A crowd gathers, traffic is held up, and in the confusion the officer accuses Crainquebille of uttering a taunt peculiarly odious to police officers. 'Mort aux vaches' were the words, and Crainquebille, bewildered, incriminates himself thoroughly. At the police court he babbles incoherently to his counsel and the judge. A distinguished doctor, witness of the scene in the street, declares Crainquebille innocent; Agent 64, recalled, is startled into accusing the doctor himself of shouting 'Mort aux vaches.' In spite of this patent absurdity, the officer, being not a man but a number, is held infallible, and the doctor's evidence discredited. Crainquebille, more bewildered than ever, is sent to prison. When he comes out he has lost his customers, and far worse, his courage before toil and poverty. Prison was better than this loneliness. Wandering miserably about, he sees another officer; he accosts him timidly, and in a trembling voice repeats 'Mort aux vaches.' The agent, half in scorn, half in pity, takes no notice. Utterly dejected, Crainquebille implores him. 'C'etait pas pour vous que j'ai dit—mort aux vaches! C'etait pas pour plus l'un que pour l'autre que je l'ai dit. C'etait pour une idée.' The officer is pitiless, and Crainquebille drifts towards the Seine: La Souris, gamin, newspaper boy, offers him half a roof and half a supper. He is saved: to-morrow he will work again. Do you desire humour? It is here, a rather bitter humour. Sadness? Here is pity so profound that tears and weakness are utterly removed from it. This is realism; it is also art, distinctive in its language, most subtle in its significance. The passion of indignation, perfectly restrained, serves but to deepen the tone and to ennoble its thought. Its philosophy is a philosophy of life: that honour and respect are due to man, and to the courage of man. Pity is for the weak and unbalanced, and weakness is not here. This is the realism of an artist, the realism that shapes life, taking account of its high worth, endowing naked and insignificant facts with meaning and power.

Schnitzler

Last of the dramatists who follow as best they may their vision of life, take Arthur Schnitzler, the Austrian. Mr Galsworthy's drama is written in the light of his intellectual understanding of the social system; Gerhart Hauptmann seeks artistic satisfaction by many paths; M. Hervieu lowers his skill to the poor passions of the average man; Schnitzler cares for none of these things; the four are alike only in their singleness of aim, a faithful presentment of a conception of life.

Schnitzler is the subtlest artist of them all. With him, as with M. Hervieu in *Le Dédale*, sex is sole dramatic motive. But with how wide a difference of treatment. The passion of M. Hervieu's men and women has the quality of a middle-class romance. It offers sufficient sensuous enjoyment, with a suggestion of comfortable domestic happiness. There is nothing of the sensuous in Schnitzler's treatment of sex love. It is an affair of an hour, a day, a week.

In the dim light shadows from the past come close for a moment and are gone. The glamour of that courtly Vienna which the war has murdered is over this drama. Not even the cynical criticism of life its art implies destroys the magic. A man, an aristocrat, drifts from mistress to mistress, wearying of one, deserted by another. Such casual touchings of human lives is almost all there is in Schnitzler's plays. There is no loud-voiced passion in their meeting; if at their parting the woman protests in anger or regret, the man is sorry or faintly disgusted: she has broken the rules. With it all, there is no little cynical observation, and the grace of frail, perfumed ladies. An undernote of melancholy deepens the charm, a half-sorrowful recognition of the subtle fading of passion. There is no judgment, no moral; only a sense of the sadness and the infinite comedy of it. The episodes of *Anatol* are characteristic. Some of them are commonplace, not even the grace of their treatment can make them otherwise: all of them are trivial, the bitter-sweet memory of shining eyes, shimmering hair, an atmosphere of twilight passing into the glow of streets and cafés. Comedy, serious-eyed, walks beside the dim procession of Anatol's loves:—

> 'One from a little suburban villa—one from her crowded drawing-room—one from her dressing-room at the theatre:—
>
> MAX: Several from their dressing-room at the theatre.
>
> ANATOL: Several. One from a shop——
>
> MAX: One from the arms of your successor.
>
> ANATOL: One from the grave. One from here, one from there.

There is more than the magic of their art in these trivialities: in the best of them the dramatist's critical attitude to life is perfectly suggested. There is the story of Anatol's love for a woman whose past he knew well, and forgave. A little while before their marriage he finds two trinkets among her papers. Together they have destroyed all remembrance of her past life, and his jealous disgust accuses her bitterly. With something more than feminine subtlety she wins him back, telling him that she had kept the one of them to remind her of the first man who loved her, the man who had made her capable of loving Anatol so deeply. Back at her feet again, he would fling away both jewels. One she sacrifices willingly: at the sight of the other greed looks out of her eyes. She cannot give it up, telling Anatol that it is a black diamond. He leaves her then, bitter and disillusioned—'So that was your price.' Trifling episode though it be, this is a small triumph of insight wedded to perfect art.

Where Schnitzler leaves this comedy of the light o' love, the qualities of his work are passion without meaning, romance without grace. *The Green Cockatoo* is an artistic melodrama, with thrusts of wit and a conscientious cynicism. It is Paris on the evening of the 14th of July, 1789, and the aristocrats are dancing over the abyss. To Prosper's underground tavern come a handful of them to be thrilled by rogues pretending to be thieves and murderers. Above, the mob is storming the Bastille: down here lords and ladies are laughing at mine host's prophecies of death, as at rare jests, and the Marquise Séverine is callously flippant after the best models. Reality thrusts in like a flame. It touches the rogues first. Henry has married Leocadie, determined to believe in her honesty, and bent on a new life outside Paris. To amuse the guests he tells them how he found the Duc de Cadignan with his wife, and murdered him.

It is not true, but the Host believes it, and tells Henri that Leocadie was well known to be the Duke's mistress. Suddenly the mob is here, and the Duc de Cadignan. Henry stabs him. In the confusion the other aristocrats escape, the Marquise clutching at her rôle to the last. 'It is a great success. One does not see a real duke really murdered every day.' In this play the clamour has overpowered the charm, and Séverine is too heartless to be true.

The Mate is a problem play which Schnitzler apparently wrote to prove that he could be dull with the worst of them. But he has written one tragedy. In *Liebelei* the note of sadness beneath his graceful indifference swells into articulate pain, the sorrow of women who cannot indifferently pass on. Faitz is entangled with a married woman, an aristocrat. The position is dangerous, and Theodor tries to save him by association with a young girl. Christine gives him passionate adoration, tender service, and the beauty of her wakening to romance. He is killed in a duel with the other woman's husband, and has been buried before she hears of it. In an agony of bewildered grief she sees the truth of her position for the first time. He has not even left a message for her.

> 'And I . . . what am I then? What was I to him? . . . Theodor, have you nothing for me then? Didn't he write anything for me? Did he give you no message for me? Haven't you found anything? . . . a letter? . . . a note?'

'What am I then?'—pitiful figure of a little tragedy, tragedy of a light o' love.

Schnitzler's drama is more than artistic trifling with pale passion. It is a protest and a glorious release, protest against the deliberate ugliness of so much of realism, the slavery to facts which confounds art and the exact sciences; release from the impassioned neurotics who rave in our plays of their sex love, demanding interest for their petty desires and disgusts, desires and disgusts that have no value for life, and off the stage cannot hold attention for a moment. Schnitzler is too much of an artist to make harsh protest against this painful lack of proportion. He does not mock our weak obsession. He makes smiling refusal to believe in the uncouth raving of passion and desire, until we ourselves are conscious that we have shouted over-much, trying to glorify thereby physical emotions that we have neither art nor inspiration to ennoble, nor sense to value at their worth. The gifts of his work are grace and sanity; not the noblest gifts of art, but rare to-day. Not of a high order, his drama is at least the best of its kind.

There is a Frenchman whose plays have some of the quality of Schnitzler's drama: irony, grace, exquisite clarity of speech. His name is Jules Renard: he is worth the reading.

With Schnitzler we end our dramatists of the good intention. There are still others whose work concerns itself with real life, following the dramatic line of least resistance. So far we have dealt with men who, for the most part, and to the limit of their powers, have treated real life faithfully. They have not exploited it to make successful plays. Nor have they feebly imitated the great realist who stands at the head of this, the second phase in the movement of revolt. Some of them have brought originality of treatment and thought to their effort to surpass Ibsen, though all of them have been but partially successful. As to their dramatic motive, they have had either genuine indignation, or a love for certain phases of life. But as in every movement, so in this, there have not been wanting dramatic camp-followers, ready to cry—Realism and Art—because it held promise of commercial success or easy fame. These produce a form of realist drama that joins a superficial appearance of thought to theatrical sensation, and pleases both parties, old and new, the pitiful army of the advanced and the vast crowd who like a good plot, a striking character, and a not too abstruse problem. To this class belongs Hermann Sudermann, German dramatist of sorts. Not all the dramatists of this class are deliberate charlatans: some merely follow in the wake of the successful, producing an imitation realism that has neither life nor thought. Of such is the work of Mr Granville Barker. These playwrights exploit life for their worthless plays, reproducing with painful accuracy the atmosphere of middle-class families and Noncomformist meetings. They have nothing of their own to give, neither the creative power that would interpret their incidents in the light of life, nor the inspiration to ennoble their thoughts and their characters. Their morality is the old conventional morality under another name: their art the technical trickery of the dealer in theatrical effect. They are the opportunists of the theatre, following the dominant drama because it is dominant, or because imitation is the limit of their power.

Sudermann

The cleverest of these is undoubtedly Hermann Sudermann. The first to use the catch phrases of revolt, he was not long in learning how far popular toleration would follow him in an attack on convention. In *Sodoms Ende* his attack was too brutal: the play failed. Sudermann has never so sinned again. He became one of the finest of dramatic craftsmen, his plays masterpieces of constructive art. They proceed from effect to effect with unfailing skill; and an illusion of advanced ideas or of intellectual depth flatters his public into supposing itself cultured and appreciative of art and high thinking. In his later plays the appearance of intellect is abandoned in favour of an appearance of audacity: the use of adultery as a subject was ever a cheap way to such a reputation.

Let us examine his achievements as a dramatist in revolt against shams, moral and social. He railed against the conventional idea of honour: he had no nobler ideal to offer in its place. He wrote a play called the *Joy of Living,* concerned with the sin of a man and woman. Their wrong-doing is long since over when they are found out. The man is a famous politician, the woman, wife of one less famous. To save his honour and avert a political scandal the man promises to shoot himself. Conveniently the woman suffers from heart disease. She takes poison because one of the two must die, and she would save her lover. Her death will be taken as heart disease, or a mistaken use of poison for her medicine. The man and the party are saved. The action is entirely concerned with their efforts, first to avert discovery, and then to stave off public exposure. The end is a skilful evasion of whatever point the story possessed. There is not the least attempt at a criticism of the morality and life depicted in the play, no realisation of the problem that faced first the lovers and later the husband. We gather that Beata and Richard are both noble characters: they conceal it excellently well in the course of the action. There is marvellous technique, but not a moment of insight, of truth for humanity. That is well enough if Sudermann desired to justify the words of the French critic who wrote: 'M. Sudermann est le Dumas fils du théâtre allemand.' But is he not one of the advanced, the revolutionary of *Die Ehre*, of *Heimat?*

Confronted with a question of general human relationship, Sudermann has degraded it to a mere intrigue. We must search further yet for his claim to modernity. What of his characters who rebel?—of Magda? (*Heimat*). Magda would appear a tremendous figure, fighting for the right to live her own life. On closer view she appears a dramatic nonentity, a poser before the footlights. True, she poses very well; every situation is arranged by a master hand, but the play remains a series of situations, and Magda remains a poser. Throughout the play she does nothing, is nothing in herself. At first she is Heffterdingt; later she is not even that arrant babbler; she is a voice, almost a shriek. It is Heffterdingt who persuades her to stop in her old home; Heffterdingt and her father who force a promise to marry Von Keller; and that from a woman who is said to be hard enough, possessed of a personality strong enough to starve and suffer for the sake of her career. Her vehement love for her art fails to impress after this, and when finally love for her child rouses her to make a tardy stand, we have ceased to believe in her. Moreover, the problem that faces Magda is not one of human significance. It arises from the accidental circumstances of German life at the time. She faces a morality, a parental tyranny, already passing. And even as an attack on a moribund system, the play fails in the failure of Magda, incarnation of the new freedom. It is a series of extremely clever situations, arising from the collision between her creed and her father's. Beyond this external effect there is nothing, for Magda has no soul, but only a number of phrases and an astonishing susceptibility to moral suasion.

So much for Sudermann's modernity of thought. What of his artistic truth, the power of the dramatist to make the life he treats significant for the human spirit? There is force, there is the art of leading up to an effect, of contriving the clash of emotions.

But sense of true reality, distinction, inspiration? Seek it in *John the Baptist*; inspiration is surely there, if anywhere at all. Here is a series of exciting situations; the skill of their technical arrangement superb: John's preaching, his sudden collapse in the sight of his disciples and followers as Herod passes the temple steps; his interview with Herodias; above all, Salome's dance and last hysterical madness. But the characters of the play? On the whole, they are as unconvincing as any in Sudermann's drama. They are not people, they are spasms of rage, monsters of ambition, mouthers of passion. In the atmosphere of adultery and foul desire the Bible words are an accusing contrast. John himself is little more than a pawn in the game. The doubt, the half-vision of a newer faith, that lead to his failure; the ambition of Herodias, the attraction of Salome, are so many threads of the intrigue, an intrigue carefully twisted, carefully brought to the culminating excitement—Salome's wild dance, and as a last magnificent contrast, the entry of the Christ. That is all, a theatrical triumph, achieved at the cost of dramatic and artistic degradation.

Take again one of his later works, the four one-act plays published under the title of *Rosen*. In the first, *Streaks of Light*, the air is heavy with the scent of dying roses. Julia, who has left her husband to join Pierre, remains hidden in an old pavilion. The shutters are always closed to keep up a pretence that the place is unoccupied. Here Pierre visits her every night. The room has grown intolerably hot; it is full of roses, and roses lie in a decaying mass behind the pavilion. It is like the lair of some animal. One day when Pierre comes, it is to tell her that Wittich, her husband, is staying quite near. They dread him, and by subtle touches the dramatist deepens the growing sense of horror. The vague danger is suddenly realised in the appearance of Wittich. The stifling room, lit only by the streaks of light coming between the shutters, darkens as the scene draws to its close. In this brothel Wittich plays with Julia and Pierre until his self-control gives way and he stabs her. She staggers a few steps and falls. Then comes the inevitable touch: as she falls she is buried beneath the roses from an overturned table. We are glad to get out of this den of beasts, the atmosphere heavy with decaying roses and decaying passion: it is a vile room. Why has the dramatist dragged us into this place? To watch a tragedy? But none of these wretches are better than animals. His reasons are far other: the effect to be wrung out of this atmosphere which stifles and oppresses is supreme of its kind. We are thrilled. We are excited against our will. This master of effect sees to that: his skill in leading up to the climax holds us to the last. But there is not a shadow of real feeling behind it, not a breath of reality.

The atmosphere of the remaining three plays is just as unreal, if less sultry. All, with the exception of the last, which is a commonplace version of the unknown princess story, are very mild smoking-room tales in dramatic form, wearisome and somewhat crude.

There is little more to say of Sudermann. Throughout his work, a mastery of stage-craft is used in the service of second-rate ideas. All effects, all emotions are predestined, led up to with supreme skill. When his sense of effect weakens, he fails to rouse either interest or disgust: he is merely boring, as in *Morituri* and in much of *Rosen*. Of all living playwrights, Sudermann possesses the most complete technique. And he can use this marvellous skill for nothing better than plays of unreal passion, of adultery, of meaningless intrigue. Most skilful of craftsmen, he has neither beauty nor strength of personality, nor insight into character, nor power of inspiration. So it is throughout modern drama: poets and thinkers who cannot well say what they dream and think; professional playwrights who have nothing to say, and the utmost skill in saying it.

Granville Barker

Mr Granville Barker's drama has not the excuse of masterly construction. On the other hand it has not the disgrace of theatrical straining after effect. It has no effect at all. Its characters mingle in a hazy suburban nightmare until it is difficult to remember whether any one of them had distinguishing traits. Some of them are bright and intelligent. Most of them suffer from anesthesia of the soul. Appalling wastes of description preface the scenes of his plays. The moral, social, topographical characteristics of Denmark Hill are detailed: we learn the fashion of the house in which the suburban family live, what Mr Huxtable said when it was built, the shape and furniture of the rooms and the quality of their antimacassors. We are not told whether the aunt of their gardener had pens, ink and paper, but we hear at length of the upbringing, nature, and present life of all the daughters; we know what Mr Huxtable said to his wife about them, and what they had for dinner. It is a curious belief, but one held widely, that accumulation of detail produces a vision of the place or person thus painfully annihilated. Mr Barker's categorical mania easily obliterates any image of the setting and characters of his plays. Would it might obliterate the conversation! Some of his people have been taking courses in Shavian wit; they are barely tolerable. The others, with their shocking age of ordinary, meaningless gabble, the dull conversation of dull people, of narrow life and narrow understanding, are entirely intolerable.

The language of drama is not the language of everyday life. The man who realised that he had been talking prose all his life realised nothing of any value. Prose, in the literary sense, is a channel for the expression of what is interesting, significant, and valuable to human beings. Prose in the dramatic sense is a medium for the revelation of character and action; it should be directed to that one end; all other speech is superfluous and undramatic. Moreover, the language of drama must be above that of everyday life, distinguished, highly significant. If the character be not worth revealing, then the language he speaks is not worth recording. Mr Barker's sweepings of middle-class respectability have neither charm nor distinction. They have not the slightest interest for us. Those with any pretensions to intellect are attitudes merely; the many without either intellect or wit are stuffed with straw. They are a series of poses, a 'mean, sensual man,' a weak-willed artist, a writing-woman, a mother's right-hand, a selfish soldier—all of them, labelled gesticulations. From the arid conversation of the stupid ones, we pass to the perpetual discussion of the intellectuals. These are in desperate search of a philosophy. It is a phase of imaginative and thinking youth, this solemn need to settle one's philosophic relationship with life. But these people have left their youth behind, and not found manhood's strength and certainties. Instead, they have faded into dim unreality, shadows discussing attitudes to life in an intellectual limbo. Philip Madras has not been on the stage a moment before he is saying—'Well, my dear Tommy, what are the two most important things in a man's character? His attitude towards money and his attitude towards women.' Mr Barker's plays are a study in the half-baked, the immature, the utterly sterile. Occasionally a figure of distinctive outline shapes itself in the crowd.

Edward Voysey's struggles with his inheritance do not succeed in making him either a definite or a fine personality. But at least they do not leave him without a few scraps of character, to which a certain whimsical humour in his surroundings adds a touch of charm. *The Marrying of Ann Leete* has more than the suggestion of charm: it has some measure of life. We are not at all sure why Ann Leete married the gardener; but that she had the vitality and the personality to make a decision and to do anything at all should leave us profoundly thankful.

There is an exception to be made. After the vague babbling plays of Mr Barker's apprenticeship, it is with uncommon delight that we come on *Waste.* Not only has it dramatic action of no slight power, but some fine drawing of character, and one great man. Henry Trebell, dominates Mr Barker's drama. He has all that the indeterminate crowd of the other plays has not—personality, distinction, power. A casual entanglement with a worthless woman wrecks his life and the work he had not completed. His suicide is tragic, tragic because it is the strength of a great man, the force of a fine purpose that is wasted in his defeat. This is Mr Barker's first drama: he has written no others.

As for the rest of his work, it is valueless; a study of 'mollusc souls.' Whatever purpose a record of petty lives may serve, it is not the purpose of art. It may be economics, it may even be sociology, or chemistry or mathematics; but it is not drama, it is not life or reality.

Here end the writers of this second and last phase of the modern drama of realism. Mr Barker is the last whose work needs particular comment. The rest is chaos. Behind the Shaws and the Galsworthys a motley crew drag the standard of realism in the dust. Stories of stupid domesticity, like Stanley

Houghton's *Younger Generation*, with the little worth of Mr Bennet's *Great Adventure* jostle plays such as the former's *Hindle Wakes* or Mr Hastings's *The Tide*. These efforts, typical of a countless number, are concerned with the problems, usually sexual, of uninteresting people, often, as in *The Tide*, of neurotic, garrulous women.

Somerset Maugham

Mr Somerset Maugham's play—*Home and Beauty*—is a witty exception, in which a finished technical skill and a flicking satire have combined to produce a charming *jeu d'esprit*.

But for the most part, the sex problems which engage the attention of the modern serious dramatist are quite worthless, having neither intellectual nor spiritual distinction, nor the hint of a vision beyond the particular and the commonplace. Either they are treated with pitiful gravity—*Hindle Wakes* and *Youth* (Mr Miles Malleson), or with the ungraceful banality of the French boulevarde comedy.

Miles Malleson

Youth is the story of a young man who feels with St Paul that it is better to marry than to burn. First he will and then again he will not. 'Oh, God . . . how youth can hurt!' The youth of this play is unhumorously sex-obsessed. One man tells the other how he met 'the strong enough girl.' 'Then I met my wife.' 'What happened to the strong enough girl?' 'Just that—she was strong enough—*she's* got a babe now—we didn't have one—we didn't link up for that.' And Nina discusses her lover with his friend. . . . 'When a tree feels the sun on its wet leaves and knows it's growing, it must feel like me. And all because I've found a man and he's found me.' Exactly!

This solemn thumbing over of sexual experiences is certainly a phase of youth—an ungraceful and rather absurd phase. Mr Malleson approaches it with an awed reverence that is easier to tolerate than the incredible puerility of Mr Harold Brighouse. *Harold Brighouse* Mr Brighouse can make a play round the love affair of a footballer with his employer's daughter. The daughter tells her protesting relatives—'I've got the sex clutch on and other things don't matter.' The footballer reads Browning and Plato, 'only not in the original,' and relinquishes the lady because his mother prefers 'a decent, hard-working girl who'll look after you properly.'

It is an amazing reflection on the mentality of the reformer that there exist numerous people who despise Miss Marie Lloyd and would banish the Delysia to put in her vacant place—Mr Harold Brighouse.

In the adulterous trifles that make up the French boulevarde comedy, husband, wife, and lover complete a triangular stupidity; and the climax is indicated by two remarks—'Je te jure' and 'Donnez-moi tes lèvres.' Occasionally a playwright varies the formula. *Alfred Capus* M. Alfred Capus is very dull : on the other hand he is very virtuous. Perhaps it is a little intrigue round the betrothal of a hard-working nonentity to a pretty daughter. Mon père consents, but Maman remains obdurate until the last scene. Or a divorcée wishes to marry, but fears for her child. Whatever the plot, it is all very innocent, and delightfully bourgeois. In idea and in language, M. Capus's comedies belong to the middle-class. It is the class he knows, and he writes of it with suburban unction and in a manner infinitely boring.

In the chaos there is also the play of strong situations. Passion burns, murders are done, and *Bernstein* there are no more cakes and ale. The virtuous daughter of a rich plebeian marries to please her father. She achieves a lover. Flinging herself upon him before dinner she notices that his dark eyes are troubled. Hot lips, straining arms, disavowals from the gentleman, entreaties from the lady, give the pair a magnificent opportunity to develop their histrionic talent. It is incredible how few scenes it takes to transform a virtuous wife into a tragedy queen. The truth at last! He has gambled away trust money, he is ruined. No, he will not fly with her; and in a while, he will. She spends the next day raising money for him; unhappily she comes a whole scene too late—probably the fault of the call-boy—and when she arrives he has shot himself. We leave her beating on the door in an admirable frenzy. This is M. Bernstein. It pays to produce his plays.

Hartleben

There was an officer in a crack German regiment. He loved a girl of no rank, loved her to distraction, even, when she was seen leaving a brother officer's room at five o' the morning, to brain fever. Recovering, he betrothes himself to a well-born fatuity. But Else, of course, was faithful. He learns it, returns to her, adores her publicly, weeps and clasps her in private. The end is scandal, murder, and suicide. This is Otto Hartleben, German playwright. And so through the list of elemental passions, nameless, characterless play-actors, hysterical murderers, adulterous neurotics.

'Is it not monstrous, that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,
That from her working, all his visage wann'd;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With form to his conceit? And all for nothing!'

Octave Mirbeau

Here and there a faker of strong plays approaches in his language a distinction of sorts. In 1897 M. Mirbeau wrote a play with scenes of some power and more than a little excellent dialogue. He has not written one since. *Les Mauvais Bergers* achieves atmosphere. In the first act a woman lies dying, worn beyond endurance. Throughout the night in the miserable house the glare and noise of the factories are either seen and heard or skilfully suggested. The workers have reached the last misery, and in the big house of the employer one talks thus—'There must be poor to make the rich realise the value of their riches—and rich to set the poor an example of the social virtues.' Jean Roule, agitator, is real up to a certain point; Hangard, the employer, is a just and worthy opponent, up to a certain point. The long dialogues do not lose interest, and we are spared indignation or social reform. These are the dramatic virtues of the play. Half-way through it falls to pieces. The first half just verges on the theatrical, the second wallows in the abyss. A drivelling amateur Socialist weakens the power of a collision between the forces of labour and capital. Jean Roule fades into unconvincing rhetoric; Madelaine, his wife, develops an appalling passion for stage speeches, and Hangard collapses into weeping imbecility. The play ends in an emotional orgy over the corpses of the amateur Socialist and Jean Roule. All is tears, hysteria and madness. Of the future no hint, only misery and weakness. M. Mirbeau has something of dramatic power, if he would not try to move mountains with it; and a trick of incisive speech, would he but refrain from distorting it out of all form by bursts of theatrical ecstasy. It is a pity that he does not. But was it not M. Mirbeau who wrote a plebeian little tragi-comedy called *Les affaires sont les affaires* with a stage love-interest and much cheap laughter of this sort?

PHINCK: And then, madame, on the way we ran over a sheep.

ISIDORE (swelling with pride): Two—two sheep (rubbing his hands). And last week I bowled

> over a cow and her calf. I just missed running over a child, the lodge-keeper's child.

The end is one elopement and a death.

I wish to treat M. Mirbeau with tolerance: he is a manufacturer of stage passions who stumbles seldom into drama, less rarely into distinctive speech.

These little playwrights are taken as examples: their fellows are countless and all dull. Equally indifferent to the heritage of Ibsen and the necessities of drama they continue to deal in an unreal realism of the most mechanical and worthless kind. Doubtless they will so continue, until the day breaks, and they are left clutching round them the rags of their formulæ.

So in chaos ends the movement of which Ibsen is the supreme attainment. It leaves many things, the intellectual greatness of Shaw, the restless grace of Hauptmann. These at least will last beyond the dawn.

'Abraham Lincoln'

Of that dawn one drama offers hesitant promise. Mr John Drinkwater's play of *Abraham Lincoln* is a definite expression of the modern attitude in the face of tragedy. In the classic drama, tragedy, stepping inexorably out of the past, was always bigger than its victims. They were noble or magnificently defiant because in no other way could their doom escape the unhappy aspect of a massacre of innocents. But still a tragic Fate was the central figure of the play, dwarfing its mortal protagonist. From this prisoning weight the Greek spirit escaped hardily by its belief in an ideal justice. Shakespearian tragedy offers no such way of escape. It is bearable only in so far as we find it inspiring to see 'in mimic action' how terrible a strain the spirit of man can endure.

On the threshold of modernity, the human spirit was met by the strangling forces of a power called

Heredity, or Circumstance. Rosmer, Rebecca West, and Falder perished at its hands, feeble victims of an omnipotent avenger. Modern drama wrestled with this inhuman antagonist 'until the breaking of the day.' *Abraham Lincoln* bears no mark of that struggle. Its author knows, as we now know, that man is bigger than his past, bigger than his present. He is as big as his future, and that is his for the making. When death or failure come to end the high hopes and the brave plans, we can endure the mortal tragedy because it is a little thing beside the immortal triumph. That which Abraham Lincoln wrought for man did not die, but lives, as also lives for ever the glory of,—

> . . . man's desire and valiance that range
> All circumstance, and come to port unspent.

It is easy to pick faults out of *Abraham Lincoln.* They show oddly crude in so finished a work: in the first scene, the incredible liberties that Stone and Cuffney take with Mrs Lincoln's 'best room' and Mr Lincoln's name: the play with a mother's photograph in the incident of the condemned soldier—this may have a basis in fact but is here one of the 'facts' that the dramatist might well have shrunk from using: last and least forgivable, Stanton's final comment, on the very top of tragedy—'Now he belongs to the ages,' an incongruous touch of the pompous.

American critics have found worse fault with the play. A critic writing in the Boston *Transcript,* after falling foul of errors of detail, 'showing how badly the author has handled his historical material,' declares roundly that 'Mr Drinkwater does not understand Abraham Lincoln himself.'

I am not prepared to defend Mr Drinkwater's Lincoln on historical grounds. If the defence were possible, it would not be worth making.

The dramatist is not concerned, as is the historian, with a faithful record. He is concerned only to show a character, humanly significant, developing in conflict with affairs of moment. If Mr Drinkwater had mishandled Abraham Lincoln, had made him appear mean or poorly self-interested, then not America only, but the whole world might justifiably have resented the presumption. But the figure of Mr Drinkwater's play is not in any way ill-conceived, nor—save in small detail—ill-executed. He handles a nation's destiny 'in pitiful, high-hearted fashion.' He is not smaller than his theme, nor duller than his thought. Mr Drinkwater has taken the 'travelled lonely captain,' and out of the journeying of his spirit made a drama that, with all its imperfections, does not crave attention but demands it.

> Events go by. And upon circumstance
> Disaster strikes with the blind sweep of chance,
> And this our mimic action was a theme,
> Kinsmen, as life is, clouded as a dream.
> But, as we spoke, presiding everywhere
> Upon event was one man's character.
> And that endures; it is the token sent
> Always to man for man's own government.

Abraham Lincoln is a fitting prelude to a new drama, the drama of a new age.

The last of the naturalists

There remains only to note the passing of the earlier dramatic movement. With the death of Strindberg, the only naturalist drama of any distinction or claim to greatness came to an end. Its work was over: it destroyed the artificial stupidities of the prevailing art, provided a literary impulse of genuine vitality, and prepared the way for Ibsen and a truer conception of realism.

'*Nan*'

No such movement dies suddenly. A few playwrights stumble in its train, unconscious that life has long since left it and them, painfully reproducing the old usage of drink, disease, poverty, and crime. Slaves to an outworn creed, they play with unreal passion, sterile ideas; most of their work is ugly, that is to say, inartistic; viciously exciting, that is to say, undramatic. Instances are not far to seek. There is Mr Masefield's *Tragedy of Nan* ready to our hand. Nan's father was hanged for sheep-stealing: she lives with the Pargetters, who hate and ill-treat her. Their daughter tricks her into confessing a love for Dick Gurvil. Mrs Pargetter completes the treachery by forcing Dick to realise that his father will not let him marry a girl of evil parentage. He joins the rest in jeering at her. Then, after the news of her father's innocence is brought, and compensation money for Nan, he returns to her. She will have none of his sensual greed. She stabs him and goes out to drown herself. This is the story, sufficiently commonplace—a story of brutality and crime. There is nothing in spirit or treatment to ennoble it. The meanness and stupidity of the other characters are balanced by the character of Nan, undisciplined and unhealthy. She threatens Mrs Pargetter with a knife, forces Jenny to eat the pasty made with rotten meat, and before she stabs Dick with the pastry-knife, talks to him of blood and hell like a decadent poet of foul things. The love scene between Nan and Dick Gurvil leaves with us a disagreeable impression that we have been looking through a keyhole at a degrading sight. Dick mumbling over Nan's loosened hair, and her unrestrained desire rouse little more than a feeling of resentful disgust.

Wherever Nan's speech is above the ordinary it becomes unnatural—'There be three times, Dick, when no woman can speak. Beautiful times. When 'er 'ears her lover, and when 'er gives herself, and when 'er little one is born.' These are not the words of a passionate peasant—they are nearer the erotic imagination of Mr Masefield's verse. When she stabs Dick it is because he stamps on women's bodies and feels only 'the blood making a mess' on his boots. 'Oh, young man in your beauty—Young man in your strong hunger, I will spare those women' (stabs the young man). For relief from this unpleasant raving, we are given the speech of the vulgar and the pseudo-poetic maundering of the Gaffer. 'For first there come a-wammerin' and a-wammerin'. Miles away that wammerin' be. In the sea. The shipmen do cross themselves. And it come up. It come nearer. Wammerin', Wammerin'! 'Ush it says, 'Ush it says, 'Ush it says.'

An ugly story: two mean and silly women, a foul-mouthed, sensual youth, an insensate old man, and an hysterical girl are its characters. The language is either below common decency or strained out of all semblance to reality. It is not tragedy because not one of its people was worth a moment's thought; it is not art, having neither beauty of form, nor greatness of content. It remains a tale of evil, most evilly told, fairly typical of a belated Naturalism, a thing 'most foul, strange, and unnatural.'

No man has played so strange a part in literature as the peasant, degraded now, now idealised, but never, save perhaps once in Sicily, allowed his own beauty, sincerity, and limited intellect. He has been given a crook, a setting and a speech of which the charm triumphed hardily over the artifice. Once at least in English literature, through Crabbe, he has shown himself in all the brutish harshness of his poorest state. But no other false image has done so much harm as the one set up for worship by Wordsworth. His deliberate misconception of the peasant has been the more powerful for evil as it is the more subtle. He chose, he says, for his lyrics, 'low and rustic life,' because 'in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated.' Now it is, to take up one only of the false ideas behind the words, a perverse and untenable belief that the conditions of low and rustic life tend generally to the maturing of the essential passions of the heart. But from this rarefied peasant of the poet's imagination has sprung a teeming race. Now it has stepped from the poetry shelf to the stage, bringing with it the pseudo-philosophy, the unnatural speech, and the elementary passions with which Wordsworth, the æsthetician, dowered it. Wordsworth, the poet, created many a truthful and impressive vision of 'low and rustic life.' The peasant of the modern naturalist play is nothing if not low: he is rustic only by implication. He delights in a strange rhetoric: he has a trick of decasyllabic lines: or his language is so deplorable that he ought never to have been allowed in the theatre. The very Wordsworth who professed to see 'no essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition' would have shrunk from the blank verse composed by the peasants of Mr Lascelles Abercrombie's *Deborah*.

> DEBORAH: Barnaby. Your kit's ready now, I think. You'll need to cord it well: the lock's not good.
>
> BARNABY: Lucky for me you had this chest put by, I've not too many shillings.

DEBORAH : Yes, 'twas lucky.
BARNABY : You've never told me where it came from.
DEBORAH : No?

All the expressions of passion that are too vulgar or too strained for use in the ordinary way of dialogue are foisted on to the characters of a low and rustic play, in the attempt, it would seem, to attain the 'essential.' Pity that the essential should be so hoydonish. It is possible that the average peasant ought never to be set talking by dramatist or poet except in the way of light comedy. Since he is most often a man of few words who hesitates to formulate either a philosophy or an essential passion, his emotions cannot adequately be set forth in blank verse or dramatic dialogue. For such adequate expression we must look to the painter, who cannot be hampered or misled by the dumbness or stupid garrulity of his subject. It is clear that this does not rule out the noble peasant of Euripidean imagination. He is set as high above the naturalist peasant of Mr Masefield's dreams as his thoughts and words were above those of the Bœotian peasant of his day. He remains a witness to the truth that the essential passions are not to be expressed in the natural speech of Bœotia. The difference between the peasant husband of Electra and the peasant lover of Dick Gurvil is that one is above nature in his nobility and the other below it in her unpleasant sexual maundering. The former is justified of its setting aside of probability; the latter can be justified on no ground of reality or imaginative beauty. When we have forgiven Wordsworth the Idiot Boy, and the æsthetic heresy we find it hard to forgive him that he set the door ajar for the garrulous midwives, the earthy philosophers, sham mystics, impassioned degenerates and foul mouths of the peasant of naturalist imagination.

Maxim Gorki

There are better things than *Nan* among the latter-day naturalists. In Russia Maxim Gorki's work is a new spirit in Russian drama, almost a new inspiration. His play treats of poverty and failure. But in the depths hope is born, and a new strength. Not in peasants, nor in dreamers, but in the growing unrest and strength of the underworld he found the spirit of the future. He despises the weak-willed egoists of so much of Russian literature. He takes a type of man who has failed, but will not whine of circumstance or fate, an aggressive idealist, refusing defeat as steadily as he refuses romantic pessimism. Such men know their failure, and their blind courage before the knowledge is the element of hope and power in a drama otherwise uninspired and incoherent. It is one of these damaged heroes who says: 'I have no inner life to follow—do you understand me? I don't know how to say it. I have not the spark in my being—power perhaps? Something is missing.' With this clear sight there is in all the plays the spirit that demands of life knowledge and experience, and the power to live joyfully, even in defeat. 'Make a stand! take a firmer footing!' It is no mean spirit, and one that makes these plays of disorder and misery greater than any of their kind. Most of the characters are drawn from the tramps of Southern Russia, a type of man Gorki knew better than any other. In this he is the descendant of a series of folk novelists who preceded him for half a century, possessing their power of description, and above that a need to determine a purpose in life which makes him the more nearly an artist. The one play that best expresses this need is the only one in which he approaches dramatic power.

The Night Shelter has been played in England under the name of *The Lower Depths*. It is not a drama, save in the most arbitrary use of the word, but its dramatic effect is intense. The masterly treatment of its setting, the power of the characters make it so; and above all, the savage note of rebellion, not only against conditions, but against a conception of life. The four scenes pass in the doss-house where a group of outcasts are herding, their misery and poverty all they have in common. A drink-sodden actor, a ruined aristocrat, a prostitute, a thief, and others like them, talk, each to an audience of one : a dying woman moans at intervals. The construction is spasmodic, but not without subtlety. It turns round the thief's efforts to be rid of his old life and start afresh with Natasha. He is entangled with Vassilisa, and from the first his tragic failure is foreshadowed. As Pepel's resolve gathers strength, Vassilisa lays her plans for vengeance. The third act comes near a touch of beauty in the scene between Pepel and Natasha, as the shadows of fate close on their struggle. Vassilisa's staring eyes terrify the girl : with Luka's warning tragedy is very close, and when it comes its force is intense.

This thread of action, slight as it is, suggests the real dramatic motive. Man, even these men who live like beasts, is great because he is 'a bridge, not a goal.' There is one, Luka, who preaches the Tolstoyan doctrine of faith and love. But he accomplishes nothing. The actor hangs himself, Pepel is arrested, and in the squalor and misery the woman dies. Satine, drunkard and gambler, judges him.

'He lied, but out of pity for you, devil take you ! There's lots of people that lie out of pity for their neighbours—I know. I've read. Beautifully, inspiredly, affectingly, they lie ! There's the consoling lie, the perceptive lie—the lie to justify the burden that crushes the hand of the worker—to lay blame on the starving. I know about lies! The weak of spirit and them that live on the sap of others—its them that need lying—some it supports, and others—it screens. But him that's his own master—who don't depend on others, and don't feed on others, why should he lie? Lying's the religion of slaves and masters—Truth's the God of the free men.'

It is Satine who finds words for the struggling power of the play, and makes articulate its eternal protest. 'A man is free . . . he pays for everything himself!—for belief, for unbelief, for truth, for wisdom. . . . You must respect mankind! Not pity him—not lower him with pity. . . . I've always despised people who worry too much about stuffing themselves. . . . Man is higher than that. Man is higher than repletion.' In that faith, in that protest, *A Night Shelter* is more than mere Naturalism. It is dramatic truth of the highest kind, the truth of a fine conception of life.

Gorki has written no other play to rank with this. He came at the end of the nineteenth century, when Russia, hope and faith utterly lost, demanded a new ideal. He offered them—the Superman. With one exception his drama attacks the old despair and offers no articulate purpose in its place. He takes a man like Nils—an engine-driver, brutal, overbearing, and places his self-reliance and strength of will over against the neurotic cleverness of the intellectual. But he cannot suggest what his self-willed engine drivers and the dominating women of his later plays may make of the future, what new ideal, new purpose, they can offer men. They are as sterile as the weak dreamers of Russia's despair. There is *A Night Shelter*: it has a living ideal, a coherent view of life.

But the rest of his plays have neither inspiration nor beauty. Mere records of a disordered time, to-morrow they will lose what little power they have.

Of the other playwrights who fill the theatre with tales of squalor and crime there is little good to be said. Their work is no more than the exploitation of misery and sin, for the easier exciting of jaded minds. Here and there, one of these playwrights, with a saner mind and a wider vision than his fellows achieves something that may be treated as drama. The work of the Dutch playwright, Hermann Heijermans, is the best of this kind. He has more than a little power in the creation of atmosphere. There is quiet force and a gray beauty in his studies of the peasants who starve on the banks of the canals. Moreover, he has written at least one fine drama. His play of *The Good Hope* holds something of the power of the sea. A shipowner sends out a leaky trawler, fully aware of the danger. She goes down in the storm with all hands, husbands and sons and lovers: one man leaves a girl with an unborn child. The wind sweeps through the scenes, and the sea plays with the lives of men, the sound of her breakers a tragic chorus to the despair of the little town. The old men and women huddled together in a cottage tell stories of the sea, of men swept overboard, of the danger of the Dogger Bank, of the heart-sickening watch for the boat overdue, and the slow despair. The moral of the play is out of place. Not shipowners, but the chances of their trade rule the lives of fishermen. 'The sea took him,' the women say: and Heijermans achieves the tragic spirit only when he leaves his denunciation of owners to speak of her clutching hands.

Hermann Heijermans

With *The Ghetto* this play is all Heijermans's claim to distinction. *The Ghetto*, the story of a Christian girl in the Jews' quarter is technically the best of his work. Rose, Rafael, her lover, his miserly father, and the Rabbi have interest, force of character; the action is developed with more than a little power. Heijermans has no other plays like these. The rest of his work follows its like into oblivion, dragging after the herd of insignificant and sterile plays, whose authors stumble behind a dead faith, slaves to the life they should have mastered. From *The Father* to *Nan* it is a weary descent.

II

THE DRAMA OF THE REACTION AGAINST REALISM

I have already remarked the two-fold nature of this reaction. It was a revolt not only against the drabness of realist drama but against the conception of life behind it. It was, moreover, two-fold in expression. Against the materialism of the prevailing dramatic philosophy, it set a curious symbolism, for the most part merely decorative, but sometimes dignifying itself with the name of Mysticism. Had St John of the Cross, mounting through a Triple Night to the realisation of Infinity foreseen it, he must have scorned such following even in his anguish.

Further, they laid hands on Romance, tearing her rich garments to hide their nakedness. Two, at least, of the Romantics are artists, and have dealt faithfully by their mistress: the rest have made of her a courtesan.

These two forms, the symbolist and the romantic, are not distinct in the playwrights of the reaction. M. Mæterlinck, for instance, uses both: his woods and darkened castles belong to an old romance; and the dim figures that slip along their corridors and through the trees are symbols of the human soul. But in M. Mæterlinck's drama, and in the work of some others, its symbolic meaning is the more insistent. The colour and music of Romance, which is the glory of Rostand's drama, and more nobly of Hofmannsthal's, fades in their work to a shadowed background.

Mæterlinck

First of the symbolists is M. Mæterlinck. I have heard his drama called mystical. For this strange error his other writings are perhaps responsible. Concerning their philosophy I say nothing: it is for another story. But of his drama I can say without hesitation that there is not, from beginning to end of it, one trace of Mysticism. Mysticism is beyond M. Mæterlinck. It is the recognition of a spiritual unity in the universe, of which the human soul is one part as a drop of water is a part of the ocean. Realisation of such unity is only possible through a power in man higher than his reasoning faculties. Towards it the supreme mystics of history have ever striven, seeking not only to comprehend the universal soul but to merge in it their spiritual self. Belief in an Absolute Unity, belief in the power of the human soul to realise it in an experience transcending intellect is the faith of the mystic. Is there in M. Mæterlinck's drama any approach to such a thought or faith? A mystic, moreover, is driven to express deep truth with the utmost clearness and force possible to him. M. Mæterlinck expresses few truths, and does so with an air of excessive mystery, abhorred of the true mystic.

Mystical his plays are not: symbolic they are, in their language and in their characters. The words pass into symbols, striving to make articulate the buried life of the soul. The past echoes in them; their music comes upon the ear bearing subtle suggestions of a deeper sense. From the 'hills where his life rose' M. Mæterlinck has called man's hidden self. To the dim thoughts and blind longings that stir and die in the depths of being, he has given form and life. They are the souls of men who move in the half-light of his early dramas, desiring the light, doomed to wander in obscurity, lonely or suffering. For a moment they touch, and in a moment are gone beyond recall. Fear pursues them through the shadowed corridors of the castles, waits for them behind iron doors, clutches at them in the forest. Like children they dread the unknown; like children, cannot understand their pain, and weep silently the hidden tears of the soul. 'L'âme humaine est tres silencieuse. L'âme humaine aime a s'en aller seule. Elle souffre si timidement. Mais la tristesse——' It is Fate they fear, the power of an unseen queen, suspicious and jealous. Human care may save the beloved for a moment, but the servants of Fate draw back to come again, with relentless, silent feet. And afterwards there is only the beating of hands on an iron door, the terrible madness of regret.

In the classic drama it was human strength, presumptuous or courageous, that drew on a man the punishment of the gods. In this latest drama of fate, terror and weakness hide from a mysterious figure wrapped in the cloak of a dim romance, half seen in the shadows of a child's dream. It is nothing that a man does, either of great evil or great good, that brings him beneath the anger of the unseen. Destiny, inevitable, strikes in the darkness. The human will that tried its strength against fate, asserting its greatness even in defeat, is dead. The terrified children of this spirit drama have no will: they are driven by instinctive desire and fear. This philosophy written in symbols is a fatalist's negation of philosophy. The best that M. Mæterlinck can offer his followers is resignation in the certainty of defeat. His eyes turned towards the shadows of the cave, he makes shadows of shadows, exquisite puppets that move to his feeble bidding. Death and despair are beneath the symbols of his plays: he has not the courage or the power to create life. Test his shadowy creed by the intense faith of another poet mystic. Like William Blake, M. Mæterlinck would write of a spiritual world. But Blake believed in the existence of his spiritual vision. He lived his visionary life in all the strength of body and soul and mind: for him there was no other. He walked in a spiritual world during his whole life, and it was to him real, the external world unreal. 'A Spirit and a Vision are not,' he said, 'as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing.' M. Mæterlinck sees his spiritual world in reflections on the wall of the cave. He hardly believes in what he sees, and his spirits are nearer cloudy vapours than symbols of life.

Whatever their weakness, the early plays were an attempt at a new dramatic vision. With *Monna Vanna* a change came over M. Mæterlinck's work. Leaving the spirit world he sought to catch the colour and sound of external life. *Monna Vanna* deals in sensations. The idea of a woman naked under her mantle is at best a dubious artifice. The simplicity of the earlier action is replaced by the conventional tricks of the theatre. Marco plays *raisonneur* with a dullness beyond belief. The last act is a triumph of artistic melodrama. Vanna has spent the night in the tent of Prinzivalle, commander of the army which was besieging Pisa. It was the condition on which he offered peace to Guido, her husband, governor of the starving city. She returns, bringing Prinzivalle with her, to save him from a sudden charge of treachery to his State. Guido, who let her go, now will not take her back nor believe that she is untouched. This gives her the chance to act magnificently. She pretends to abuse Prinzivalle, to admit that he took her, and says that she has brought him into Pisa to be avenged on him. Here are all the tricks of the stage, strained emotion, glorious lies of which the gallery fully appreciates the nobility, and at the last her swift aside to Prinzivalle—'I belong to you, I love you! Let me fasten the chains on you. I will save you. I shall be your jailer. We will fly together.' M. Mæterlinck has attempted to create the movement of real life. He has achieved musical speech, the joy of living, brave colour. Beyond this, nothing: he is here less real, infinitely less truthful than he was when he made drama of the soul's hidden life. After this he becomes a seller in the market place, a soulless dealer in theatrical trickery. *Mary Magdelene* is a series of determined sensations, with neither spiritual truth nor passion, nor reality. Pity that the dramatist ever left his hinterland: there at least he guessed at truth: here he shouts superficial falsehoods.

His early work remains. If you are content to value it for the exquisite cadence of its language. for its subtle power of suggestion, for the dim grace of its lovely, drifting souls, you will find there the charm of perfect art and perfect simplicity. You may find, moreover, a new dramatic vision in these plays where the soul's most intimate feelings pass into music. But do not search for strength, or the glory of life, or a mystical faith, or any deep philosophy, for they are not there

In modern drama M. Mæterlinck's symbolism is peculiar to himself. Strindberg alone of modern dramatists has approached a similar conception in *Swanwhite*, and Remy de Gourmont in *Le Vieux Roi*. But in most of his symbolic plays, as in M. Mæterlinck's own play of *The Blue Bird*, and in countless other modern plays that pass for symbolic, Strindberg deals in personified qualities of good and evil. And this is not symbolism but allegory, a vastly inferior dramatic method.

It is barely possible to speak of the place and value of symbolism in drama as distinct from its place and value in art as a whole. Broadly speaking, dramatic symbolism has two forms. The dramatist may create beings whose natures, actions, thoughts, and passions are of lasting significance for all men. They are eternal types at the same time that they are alive and real in any moment of time. This significance they have because in them all men or many men are comprehended. A race or an age speaks through them. An undying quality of mankind is symbolised in them. Or a truth of moment and value is embodied in them. They are nobler or more terrible than the individual in their passions and actions, and therefore do not die. Or they are aflame with a spiritual significance that is still a light to man's path. By virtue of the first quality live the figures of Aeschylean drama. So lives the Antigone of Sophocles, and so, moving us with a warmer sense of kinship, the men and women of Euripides. In modern drama so stand the protagonists of the *Dance of Death*. And of those whose dramatic greatness is the truth they symbolise are Rosmer and Rebecca West, created by Ibsen in an intuitive knowledge of the truth that the man must perish who cannot respond to the Dionysian need for a renewal of life.

It is clear that in this form, in the creation of lasting types and the embodiment of lasting truth, symbolism is an inseparable attribute of great drama. It is, moreover, a form of symbolism which has no dangers for the incompetent. It springs from the creative power and penetrating insight of a great mind. In the plays of men of little minds it simply does not appear. As, for instance, *The Younger Generation* symbolises nothing, either of youth or rebellion.

The second form of symbolism is by its nature of less inherent value to drama. It consists in regarding the whole natural world as a symbol of an inner spiritual reality. On its external side, this is pantheism. Viewed in the light of a belief in the possibility of communion between man and God, it is mysticism. The mystic view of human life as a drop in the ocean of the divine life, in it, of it, and penetrated by it, and the pantheistic view of all nature, including man, as the veil of God, have in common their symbolic interpretation of the natural world. So to Blake, the lamb of his *Songs of Innocence* was the eternal image of which all other lambs are the copies. The dramatic possibilities of this form are particular and indirect. *The Dawn* by Emile Verhæren, is at the same time a rare attempt to use it in the service of the theatre, and a signal proof of the contradictions involved in the attempt. For drama is born from the movements of Becoming; and the universe viewed as a symbol of spiritual reality has transcended Becoming and is at the moment of Being.

Apart from these two forms, never entirely to be separated, there is another way in which dramatists may use the language of symbolism. This is by the creation of arbitrary forms as bodies for their visions. It is clear that such a symbolism cannot be justified of its form alone. If it has nothing to reveal or express it is at best an embroidery, at worst a meaningless redundance. At its highest, this form has produced the visionary world of Blake. We may not, at every moment, grasp the full significance of his Four Zoas, but it is clear that they have a significance, and one of universal import. The flame burns clear at times, and at times is smothered in smoke. At best, they demand to be apprehended in the soul, beyond any comprehension by our limited human reason. Their creator is justified of his creation.

At its lowest, this arbitrary symbolism produces Strindberg's *Advent*, and the plays in which nameless persons—A Prince, or A Cripple, or A Black Man—make vague remarks and perform senseless actions which are symbols of nothing at all. The eternal types of classic tragedy are also living beings; from these others individuality has been withheld, but they are none the nearer inward significance for that. They are only nearer nonentity and inanity. They remain puppets, to be jerked here and there at the will of their maker; any meaning that they have is inserted through a slot in the back or affixed by a label on the chest.

It is a thin line that divides this arbitrary symbol-making from the purely spectacular qualities of the pageant. The procession of animals that typify the nations in Carl Hauptmann's[1] *Te Deum* is on the far side of the line. Here are the undefined beings:—a Cripple-Philosopher, a Blacksmith, an Escaped State Visionary, who say their little philosophic pieces, and here are the spiritual visitants who jerk on the action. Here also is a chaos of images and ideas from which a few sharply-drawn scenes alone remain in the memory. It is not only Carl Hauptmann who appears to identify symbolism with confused action and vague thought.

The value of a symbol does not lie in the enclosing crystal, but in the flame within. If it seem to you that this means no more than that a symbol must necessarily be a symbol of something, regard the vast number of those modern plays which are styled symbolic, and see whether their authors were as aware of the necessity. You will find, on the contrary, that many of them regard a symbol as something in the nature of a fairy-lamp, to be used for decorative purposes. Symbolism to them means little more than the translation of one thing into the terms of another set of things, the heaping up of strange or beautiful synonyms. They move them about much as little Kay in the Hans Andersen tale moved about the blocks of ice in the hope of making them mean something, and with as frigid and meaningless a result. This, of course, is not symbolism : it is only phrase-making.

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[1] Elder brother of Gerhart Hauptmann.

Remy de Gourmont

In his work Remy de Gourmont used this merely decorative symbolism with the utmost subtlety. He wrote only four plays. One is a drama in name only : another is an unpleasant story told in the brocaded manner. Another—*Théodat*—is an incident, in itself of passing interest, developed with much skill. A discussion on the forms of heresy and a recital of all the sacred vestments are added to achieve effects which belong to the novelist or the painter rather than to the dramatist.

The fourth play is decorative symbolism in its most finished form. *Le Vieux Roi* was written in 1897. It is the most notable achievement in the theatre of the French school of *Symbolistes*. This is Gautier, the page,—

'My hair is a foliage of desires and dreams where the wind of life plays with love. Strip off my leaves, wind, and bear me toward the track of the white-winged ships on the flowering sea. O, blossoming sea, wild garden of waves. You are afraid of a desire, Floraine, you are afraid of a bird.'

The whole natural world is not here the mortal body of an immortal reality. It is a playbox that the dramatist rifles for images to hang on the figures of his show. He piles one on top of the other, to make a veritable Tower of Babel, one idea in a hundred forms, one image with a thousand faces.

Guislane—'O my love, O my love, O my life! I am the world on the eve of creation. I am a chaos full of beauty, I hold the sun in my night, and the stars in my abysses; streams of peace and of joy flow through the formless shadows of my mountains, and the mud of my marshes glitters with the pure glory of future flowers. I am the sea, filled with prodigious sigh of storms and waves; I am the cloud which will weep with joy; I am the sown place of fields at the hour when spring casts on the world the divine veil of puberty.'

The style is stiff with beautiful phrases; the content is small and rotten. Here is the exaggerated speech of degeneracy, the yearning of the feeble for fierce and fiercer passions,—

'I am life. I am she who blooms on ruins, and who transforms the dark soil of dead leaves into live leaves. I am urged on by God. I go. I am everything since I am. I want to enjoy the infinity of pleasure. I want to flower. I want the flower of my stem to be as large as the world.'

M. Remy de Gourmont's phrases are like those beautiful wood-maidens who will not let you look behind them lest you should see that they are hollow and vile. The phrases and puppets of *Le Vieux Roi* are not vile: they are too meaningless for that: but they are hollow, and they are spiritually insignificant.

They are symbolic only in the modern misuse of the term, expressing no truth, typifying no lasting human quality.

Emile Verhæren

The plays of Emile Verhæren come nearer than any other modern drama to the stock methods of the orthodox symbolic writer. He takes the natural world for his symbol. Cities, countryside, all the outward life of man, are the visible expression of a deep truth. He writes in symbolic metaphors that make great show of colour and beauty. His work must be judged not only for the beauty of its form, but for the truth and value of its content. Drama is never justified of its form alone. Leaving aside for the moment the worth of its imagery, M. Verhæren's work can rarely be justified by the value of the truth expressed. In countless instances the idea is smaller than its metaphorical form. Take the images of *The Dawn*,—

> 'The netted rails, upon the plains bestarred
> With golden signals, swarm.
> Trains graze the meadow-lands, and pierce the banks;
> The living skies are eaten up with piercing smoke;
> The grass bleeds.'

This suggests less a railway than the lyrical advertisement of a mechanical toy. It is not a solitary instance of bombast. Image is heaped on image until the world, grown a Chinese puzzle-picture, reels and totters into confusion. An inartistic trick of referring to current fads drags his thought to earth with ludicrous suddenness, 'We kill the germs; we overheat them; we arrange, we reason, we contrive! The earth isn't a wife now; it's a kept woman.' To come like this upon a scrap of feminist cant in the middle of a vision of the ruined country-side is utterly destructive of dramatic and artistic effect. Even less pardonable is the confusion of his metaphors: they are not vision but mere words that fall apart at the least touch. Take this description of the city:—

> 'O these cities! these cities!
> That spread themselves abroad like heaps of rottenness,
> Like soft or vehement breeds of slime

Whose mouths and suckers wait to suck
The noble blood of all the world.'

And this later one,—

'And now that it is puffed and sated with its vices,
And drunk enough to drink the very dregs
That foul its gutters to the brim
All the dull evils, all the muddy lusts,
Hang at its girdle night and day
And drain its breast, like hungering wolves—
. . . .
She in her hands yet holds——'

Impersonal abuse passing into meaningless personification, metaphors that refuse to take form, are the too frequent disfigurements of his thought. The result is utter confusion. The symbolism of this play has not passed from vision to form but from laborious thought to chaos. Creation with M. Verhæren is a matter of the nervous system: it is as though his mental activity bubbled over into his nerves and was lost. Moved by the intense excitement of creative desire, he has no power to control or shape it. In consequence the violence of his struggle to express in symbol what he has conceived by intellect, tears his conception to rags. *The Dawn* is an insensate nightmare, a medley of wild images and colours, the frantic attempt to catch a vision only half seen by the dramatist himself. And the vision? 'Sick of nameless dreads, distresses and miseries, all long after the necessary union of man with man.' Universal brotherhood is not a poor thought, but M. Verhæren is not dramatist enough to handle it. The severest judgment on his work was passed centuries ago by a master of the symbolic form that M. Verhæren has maltreated. 'And, therefore, let those who, innocent of art and science, and trusting to genius alone, rush forward to sing of the highest subjects in the highest style, confess their folly and cease from such presumption; and if in their natural sluggishness they are but geese, let them abstain from imitating the eagle soaring to the skies.' *The Dawn* has no beauty of form to help out its intellectual weakness. Moreover, if the only value of a drama be in the idea it struggles to express, then is it 'but a most lengthy, crooked, and tiresome road to its goal.'

The truth of the matter is that M. Verhæren's violence is not a sign of strength but of exhaustion. Strain and nervous excitement, utter inability to shape the confusion of symbol and metaphor, an obvious delight in wild words and exaggerated feelings are the marks of his drama. They are significant of weakness and artistic incapacity. *Hélène de Sparte* is still more clearly than *The Dawn* the work of a degenerate imagination. M. Verhæren called it a tragedy: in truth it is nothing more than a horrid melodrama. It is the story of Helen's return from Troy. She has not been back many hours before she finds that her brother, Castor, has conceived an incestuous love for her,—

'. . . la femme (it is Castor who speaks)
Donc l'Europe et l'Asie ont respiré la chair;
Celle qui dominait et les villes en flamme
Et les orages noirs qui dévastarent la mer.'

'Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium.'

I refrain from talking of Marlowe. 'Here's metal more attractive.' The discovery shocks Hélène, but there is yet worse. Elektra, relentless avenger of her father, dark figure of Greek tragedy, is here made the sport of a neurotic age. She, too, suffers an unnatural passion for Hélène, and does not spare her the details. Hélène considers it all perfectly disgusting, and wishes she had never come home. In the end Castor kills Menelaus and Elektra kills Castor; Hélène is received into heaven by Zeus; and Pollux, who throughout has played the temperate man and reasoned with every one who would listen to him, is left in possession. There is nothing in the play but unnatural sexual desire. It is presumptuous thus to mishandle Elektra, thus to degrade the world's greatest drama into a shrieking horror of unreal passion, rage, and grief. The Greeks made drama of incest, or, rather, of the religious beliefs behind their view of incest. M. Verhæren has pored over its ugliness and revelled in the gratuitous degradation of a great tragic figure.

He is a failure both as dramatist and as symbolic artist. The figures of his plays are unreal, their speech and their emotions distorted and unconvincing. His symbols are the tumbled images of a confused mind. Placed beside the delicate art of M. Mæterlinck's early drama they appear monstrous. Placed beside the symbolic imagery of Blake, who, like M. Verhæren, took the world for his symbol, they appear unreal shadows, inartistic nonsense.

W. B. Yeats

Emile Verhæren is bad enough as a symbolic dramatist. Mr Yeats is infinitely worse. He represents the last state in symbolic imbecility, conjuring up spooks from the vast inane; his symbols are purely arbitrary, expressing no truth, real or imagined. To search for a meaning behind his babblings of the little people, or his visions of blue-gowned figures is to court madness. For *Where There is Nothing*, there is—W. B. Yeats.

Even when a great theme lies ready to his hand he cannot use it worthily. The longing of a nation for freedom is such a theme. Undying poems have been wrought from it: few are the great poets whom it has not touched. Round the legend of Cathleen ni Houlihan centre the dead dreams and living hopes of Irish patriots. Let us see what their national poet has made of it. A marriage of peasants and a talk of the French landing, and an old woman who babbles in riddles and lures the young man away. If you were to read Mr Yeats's play of *Cathleen ni Houlihan* to a man who had never heard of the Irish question he would find it stupid and trifling. And a play that depends for its effect entirely upon the assumption of a secret understanding between authors and audience is not a play, but an acrostic. *Cathleen ni Houlihan* depends for its impressiveness on the emotions roused in you by the old woman's complaint that she has lost her 'four beautiful green fields.' The image evoked by the words is significant or meaningless in the measure of your understanding of Ireland's national aspirations. If you are in sympathy with them, you may read into the stupid dialogue a force and a sweetness which is not in it. You may endow it with qualities that the dramatist did not put there. He was not able to put them there: he could only babble of green fields, and trust that your knowledge of Irish sufferings and hopes would interpret his feeble gestures in the right sense.

Yet this is perhaps the best of Mr Yeats's dramas, having neither the blank verse maunderings of *Shadowy Waters*, with its yearnings for something afar and probably disreputable, nor the incredible puerility of *The Land of Heart's Desire*. This latter play is perhaps the weakest of all. I choose it for detailed criticism, not from malice, but because it shows most clearly to what depths of bathos a sham symbology can lead an artist. The little singing voice of Yeats the lyricist is dumb, and here is neither grace nor power. We begin with the story. An Irish family are gathered in the room of a little house. The priest is with them, and their conversation passes from the indolence of Maire, the son's young wife, to the power of the fairies. It is important to remember the stress laid on the little people, for a child comes into the room whose words and actions are remarkably suspicious. But, in spite of her strange behaviour, in spite of their nervous fear of the fairy folk, the priest carries his cross out of the room because it terrifies the child. When the cross is gone the child reveals an alarming nature. She tries to entice Maire out and away, and Maire listens: the priest would go for the cross, but the rest of the family cling round him in terror. At length the child's alluring voice—'Come with me, little bird,' captures Maire's soul. She cries that she will come, and as the child departs, falls dead in her husband's arms. This is the story, sufficiently stupid and ill-conceived. Let us try its form. The verse passes from an incredible banality to a spurious attempt at poetry. There is a vast amount in such fashion as this,—

> 'She would not mind the griddle, milk the cow,
> Or even lay the knife, and spread the cloth.'

It may be that Mr Yeats imagines these decasyllabic lines to be blank verse. I am prepared to believe anything of him. When he attempts the poetic he is quite incapable of writing outside the stock phraseology of all the pitiful herd of minor versifiers. He will ride upon the wind, run on the top of the tide, dance upon the mountains like a flame. When he would write færy speech he is as commonplace as if he were writing of griddles and cows.

'A voice,—
The wind blows out of the gates of day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away,
While the færies dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air.'

Apart from the fact that there is no meaning in this passage, it seems sad that feet and arms suggest no more distinctive idea to Mr Yeats than the thought of milk. Moreover, I deny that færies talk as if they were minor poets of the Irish revival. To look no further back than Shakespeare, the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* speak as befits their high birth and tradition. But Mr Yeats's fairy folk are knock-kneed nothings of the spirit that can no more make drama than he can write blank verse.

It is difficult to define the thought behind this play. It appears that 'the lonely of heart' are withered away while the fairies dance in a place apart. This hardly seems right or pleasant: but it is not interesting, it is not valuable, it is not even intelligible. It is merely typical of the worthless nonsense that makes up the bulk of modern symbolism. It is because it is typical that I have given it, contemptible as it is, so much attention. For in fact there is remarkably little truth or life in that whole side of the dramatic reaction which attempts a symbolic form. Let us leave it for the drama of a distinctively romantic nature.

J. M. Barrie

It is pleasant to linger a moment in *Quality Street*, whose bowed windows look so demurely across its grass-grown cobblestones. Ladies go up and down in their pattens, the Sergeant recruits for the Napoleonic War, and the dashing Mr Brown, coming back after ten years, offers for Miss Phœbe's hand. 'Sir, the dictates of my heart enjoin me to accept your too flattering offer.' When Mr Barrie pleases, he can give voice and a soul to the scent of southernwood—dried and pressed between the browned leaves of an old Prayer Book. It is a gracious gift.

Mr Barrie is not a Romantic, though he is here in their company. His work eludes definition as does the work of all men who are masters of their art. There is nothing like it in the whole of modern drama, and though to be unique is not to be great therefore, few will be found to withhold from Mr Barrie any honouring word. Yet is 'great' an epithet of too little humanity for his whimsical and tender art. There should be words to do it honour, but they do not come readily, as does the praise we find for plays that leave us heart-whole. They should be gracious words, and kindly, like the work that waits their tribute, needing it so little.

But the drama of J. M. Barrie has other qualities than those of grace and loving kindness, and other arts than the wizardry that sets men's thoughts wandering in forgotten places and their eyes searching for forgotten dreams. There is pity, infinite pity, and—lest that become intolerable—infinite courage, defying suffering and age and death itself. Pity and courage alike have a fine, keen edge. There is nothing sentimental in the mind that called them out, giving them life and form—the form, maybe, of an awkward boy, or a 'queer old divert' of a charwoman: it is a shrewd mind, quick to see the absurdity of our unconscious posturings even while it smiles at them.

And if the true artist is he who makes life finer and nobler than it is, then is the author of *Quality Street* and *The Old Lady Shows her Medals* indubitably an artist, touching life with gentle fingers, making it braver, and sweeter to our lips. So that somewhere among the hierarchy of those great dramatists who took gods and heroes and made them types of humanity, must be found a place—lowly, if it is to please him—for the dramatist who took a charwoman and made her a symbol of man's immortal divinity.

Dunsany

Lord Dunsany has written several short plays somewhat in the manner of a Mæterlinck compelled to turn an honest penny by writing for a *Grand Guignol* which has itself been taken over by a Committee for the Ruthless Propagation of the Higher Drama. He has an American reputation.

J. M. Synge

I pass over the many plays that have been written in the belief that impossibility of subject and recklessness of treatment are sufficient for the creation of romance. On the whole, the contribution of the few real Romantics is of considerable worth. The first of them is also the least adequately covered by the label of Romance. He belongs to the same movement that produced Mr Yeats. But the drama of J. M. Synge is a very different thing from the bemused babbling of Mr Yeats's spooks. It is the Irish Literary Theatre's justification of its existence, as it is that of Mr Yeats, that he set Synge to writing pleasant plays.

Before all things an artist, Synge understood that the language of the common folk is not the language of fine drama. Therefore, he gave to his plays the charm of a distinctive speech, the speech of the Irish peasant. The preface to his *Playboy of the Western World* states as well as it can be stated the artistic worth of such a method,—

'In countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets, or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life. One has on the one side Mallarmé and Huysmans producing this literature, and on the other Ibsen and Zola dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words. On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed, and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy that has been given them in the place of the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality. In a good play every speech should be as fully flavoured as a nut or apple, and such speeches cannot be written by any one who works among people who have shut their lips on poetry. In Ireland for a few years more, we have a popular imagination that is fiery and magnificent and tender; so that those of us who wish to write, start with a chance that is not given to writers in places where the spring-time of the local life has been forgotten, and the harvest is a memory only, and the straw has been turned into bricks.'

But it is impossible to help realising that the use of so specialised a dialect gives only one sort of distinction to the language of drama, and that not the highest—the distinction of local peculiarity. In so much as grace and poetry are inherent in the speech of these peasants, Synge's drama gains in charm. To that highest power, the power of high thought expressed in a language which, though general, is yet given nobility and beauty, it can lay no claim. Nevertheless it has a quality of sweetness, and at times, as in *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, the very speakers seem not people but passing sounds of music.

Synge's finest plays are his comedies, and his finest comedy *The Tinker's Wedding*. Sarah determines to have a wedding ceremony after years of married life. The man grumbles but consents, and the priest promises his services. But the night before the wedding, the man's old mother, conscienceless as a child, barters for a drink the kettle that is half the priest's fee.

There is always a poet in Synge's plays, and Mary Byrne is the poet and dreamer of *The Tinker's Wedding*. She is none the less a villain, for the priest refuses to marry the pair, and they leave him tied in a sack triumphantly calling God's curse on them. The people are artistic creations as well as real types. The aspirations of Sarah, the poetic cynicism of the old woman, the indignant greed of the priest are more than humorous, they are humanly interesting. After this play Synge's comedies have all a strain of bitterness: the deliberate self-illusion in *The Well of the Saints* is dwelt on almost harshly. *The Playboy of the Western World*, most skilful in construction, most powerful in its characters, is the bitterest comedy of all. Christie comes to a village with a tale that he has killed his father. The peasants are only old men, women, and fools: the rest have gone to a more profitable country. Christie finds himself a hero among a crowd of feeble degenerates who gloat over his unnatural crime as a sign of strength. Synge exposes their pitiful decadence with a smile of terrible bitterness. He does not spare the last touch of scorn, for Christie's father turns up, almost unhurt. The humour is so destructive that laughter is impossible. A failure as a comedy, the play is an artistic delight as a satirical poem. There is power in all these comedies, art and thought: but none of them are for laughter, save *The Tinker's Wedding*, and that rarely.

His tragedy is as perfect in form, but less satisfactory in content. *Riders to the Sea* comes as near tragedy as a play may, and yet be not tragic but only very pitiful. One after the other Maurya's sons are taken by the sea. The last one goes out to the storm without hesitation: the sea will take what she desires, but there must be no wailing or fear. Nor is there throughout the play, not even at the end, when he is brought in drowned. 'Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.' Is this peace or stupor? Just because it is a matter of doubt, the force of the tragedy is lessened. Maurya's earlier words have more despair in them than understanding. 'They're all gone now and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east and the surf is in the west . . . and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening.' The power of the sea, and the human greatness that goes in silence to an hourly struggle against inhuman odds: these are things that need higher recognition than in an old woman's stupified resignation. But because the power and the greatness are both in it, *Riders to the Sea* is high drama, almost high tragedy.

Synge's place among modern dramatists, though high, must necessarily be as far apart from the greatest as from the mediocre. He is an artist of uncommon quality, but he left too little to form a judgment of his real strength. Again, the charm of his language, as that of a dialect, must become archaic: its finest qualities have not permanence. But by his scorn of a reforming and moralising drama, by the power and beauty of his form, by the truth of his vision of reality, he has merited not only admiration, but gratitude from the heart.

Rostand

Synge was a romantic only in the fantasy and exotic charm of his language: in all the rest he held the faith of the highest Realist, holding a conception of life rather than a poor allegiance to its facts. But there is one dramatist among the moderns in the full Romantic tradition. M. Rostand has never heard of the Théâtre Libre; he would not believe it possible that a sane audience could pretend interest in the doings of people who would pass unnoticed in a suburban drawing-room. Modern drama ends for him with Victor Hugo, and he continues to embroider grand passions and high deeds with an exuberant delight in colour and rhythm. While Naturalism gasps in the gutter, and Realism wastes its last strength in spasmodic energy, M. Rostand sings to himself in a forgotten isle of romance, sings for sheer joy of singing. His style would appear dangerous to an imitator. Let us examine the quality of his song. It is magnificently sentimental, resolutely romantic. M. Rostand is a minor poet, but he sweeps the border of fairyland for brilliant images. The atmosphere of fantasy is complete: his dramas pass in a marvellous country; the ground is a mosaic of flowers, the sky has the hazy brilliance of high noon; love here is hot, courtly, all-absorbing, and chivalry the measure of manhood. Over a strange story he flings the glorious veil that is to hide its deficiencies. He wraps himself in the romantic, disguises himself as a native of fairyland. This alien garb he wears with so easy a grace, so magnificent a pretence that admiration, almost credence, is given him. But has the gold he spreads so recklessly no shadow of tarnish now? *La Princesse Lontaine* was far outside the world, a triumphant masquerade of romantic love. *L'Aiglon* came too near earth, and the masks, seen closer, appear only extravagance of attitude. A fantasy too aggressive tears the mantle, and romance approaches dangerously near pantomime. *Chantecler* is indeed across the border; its fantasy, a grace only half-natural, turned to exaggeration and mannerism.

M. Rostand is a brave romantic; he moves in *le pays bleu* by grace of an intermittent vision and an unfeigned delight in the song of life. And if in his drama the song ring false at times, if the vision of reality mock its soulless fantasy, it may pass unchidden in this empty day. Has it not, and most of all in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, chivalry, pity, courage, love, all the virtues and passions in gorgeous dress, joy of life, and bravest music? Is that not more than a little to-day? Moreover, one cannot be for ever breaking butterflies on the wheel.

Hugo von Hofmannsthal

The reaction against realism may be forgiven its many sins in the name of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Austrian dramatist. With Schnitzler he has dipped his drama in the magic of Vienna — Vienna before war stabbed her and peace left her dying of her wounds—with Schnitzler he has trapped that city's mocking grace. But his plays have a glory of colour and music, a depth of passion that Schnitzler's have not. They form, moreover, the most purely artistic drama of modern times, their courtly grace establishing them in an aristocracy of the theatre. Their art is magnificent. Their dramatic value lies as little as possible in their content. Were it not for their experiments in form they would be dramatic failures. Hofmannsthal lacks a sense of the theatre, and the power to realise character. His vision is that of the artist and the sculptor. His people, like his plays, are all colour and form; their life is at best spasmodic, suggested, not realised. This is clear from the beginning of his work. His early drama has little enough of real passion or of deep thought: it has more than uncommon distinction in its beauty of style. The characters of *Gestern* are those of *Anatol*; they have the same graceful melancholy. But they move in mediæval Florence; the colour and passionate beauty of the Renaissance art fall round them. In these plays, Hofmannsthal has a mastery over language and rhythm, which has more of subtlety in his later work, but could hardly have a fairer melody. *Der Tor und der Tod* comes nearer dramatic force than most of this early work. Claudio, the Fool, has lived on his own emotions until, starved and impotent, they leave him naked to a life he does not know. When Death 'playing upon his violin' comes to seek him, he cries out to the life that is passing: and only the ghosts of the love he missed answer him from the shadows.

When Hofmannsthal's revolt against the mediocrity of realism sent him to classic myth, his drama became more than artistic reaction; it became significant for the future. He brought to his Greek plays the weakness of his earlier work, an inability to create life in his gorgeous figures. *Elektra* is not lacking in dramatic sense, but it is almost entirely deficient in dramatic grasp of character. Hofmannsthal has attempted the impossible. The classic motive of Fate was an intimate part of the Grecian religious and mental outlook, never the arbitrary act of gods or men. The death of Antigone was not the mere tyranny of Kreon, nor the death of Klytemnestra and Aegisthus only the self-willed revenge of Elektra. It was the gods' punishment for human presumption, working through human agency. The gods and the religion of Greece are alien to the modern faith and outlook. The high simplicity of the issues in the Attic drama are beyond our reach, and the modern dramatist must re-create its figures from his own flesh and blood. Only so can they move again in the pages of modernity. Hofmannsthal has not been able to do this. In consequence, the revenge of Elektra, falling from its high state as a divine judgment, has become mere lust for blood. Orestes is a passing word; Klytemnestra unreal, alike in her contempt and in her fear; Elektra, an impassioned shadow. At times she is more animal than human: she 'crouches like a beast in its lair,' tears at the ground with her hands, twists through 'a nameless dance.' But the glory of verse that covers these ghosts with a semblance of life is torn from the mantle of a god. There are scenes and speeches of unforgettable power: Elektra, striking to the Queen's heart the vision of her last flight through the palace, the footsteps of the pursuer drawing near as fear drags at her limbs; Elektra beating at the door of the palace; Elektra flinging her triumph at the waiting gods before she falls dead at their feet on the threshold where vengeance passed. These are great things, and the manner of their telling is greater. But it is only the ghosts of the old drama who cry an unreal passion, feign terrible deeds and thoughts in verse of superb beauty.

This beauty of form and glory of verse is the lasting value of Hofmannsthal's finest plays. It is modernity's greatest protest against the deceit practised in her name and Reality's. It is more. In *Ödipus und die Sphinx*, Hofmannsthal attempts a dramatic form that brings him into touch with the whole European movement towards change, the movement for a wider and a nobler rhythm of action, character and form. It is impossible to say that the verse of the

Ödipus responds to every emotional change in the action, but it is a more supple and delicate form of expression than any other in modern drama. It is the veritable body of the action, moulded to its development with perfect subtlety. Take this, a chance instance:—

The voices of the Storm,—
  Die wir tote Könige sind,
  wir thronen im Wind
  die wir gewaltig waren
  uns schleift der Sturm an den Haaren
  und dieser ist unser Sohn.
Odipus,—
  Erde, du musst nun allein meine Mutter sein
  Sie stillen Wolken, die lauten Winde sind meine
    Geschwister
  Ich hab' alles fortgegeben,
  Mir dass ich dein Kind bin, das ist mein Leben.

At his first entrance the Herald continues the rhyming lines, but drops them in the quick give and take of the dispute, and with the entry of Laïos the verse passes again into statelier rhythm. So throughout the play the modulation of its form is exquisite. This makes the significance of Hofmannsthal's drama. It is not only the highest and strongest note of the protest against modern realism. The music and glory of its form carry it to the door of the future; almost they carry it beyond. Here, with its highest achievement, we leave the drama of the reaction. In Synge and Hofmannsthal, far less surely in M. Mæterlinck's earlier work, it has justified its rebellion.

III

THE DRAMA OF THE SOUTH: ITALY AND SPAIN

When the naturalist movement spread over Europe it penetrated most easily to Italy and Spain. For Spanish literature has a heritage of Naturalism in its novels, and Italian the memory of a tense and quivering realism. Hence the modern realist movement was neither alien nor rebel in the south. And being neither new nor strange, it served only to stimulate the national spirit. Thereafter it merged into the modern movement of the south and was absorbed. It never held dominion as in the north. The only purely social plays are those of Dicenta, the Spanish playwright, and they are a naturalist drama of working men who suffer and protest. After the naturalists came Ibsen, but his influence was less strong than the earlier impulse. In Spain, Echegaray turned him to melodrama: in Italy, Bracco's early plays transferred a curious interpretation of his philosophy to Naples and Neapolitan people. At the same time, the influence of Dumas and Sardou was by no means dead at the beginning of the period. And with this curious mingling of influence is a movement, confused at first, and gradually stronger as the nineteenth century closes. That is the movement towards a national drama, a drama true to the highest traditions of the southern theatre, and worthy of its future. It is this movement, distinct in each country, moving in each country along differing lines, that distinguishes the drama of Italy and Spain from the whole drama of the north, and makes it impossible to treat of these southern dramatists with those of the north.

ITALY

Let us look first to Italy. The drama of Italy, as her literature, is born of conflicting elements: the pagan spirit triumphant in her religion, and the mystical idealism at its heart: with these there is the intense desire of perfect form that is her richest heritage. The joy of her art is pagan, delight in the body and all beautiful forms; its sadness, the pity that life and beauty, born in a breath, in a breath are gone. But with the end of the past century the pessimism that came like mildew on the north entered Italy It shadowed the literary glory of the nineties, in Carducci's regret for a lost beauty, in the sorrowful weariness of Graf, in the feverish revolt of D'Annunzio against spiritual and intellectual dryness. The revolt was born only of the pessimism: if, as in the early drama of Bracco, Italy accepted modern realism it was to hide it in the light, breath, and melody of the south. But for the most part, she held to her memory of a higher realism, that of Alfieri, the power and flame of life in its moments of intensest conflict. So that D'Annunzio, most realistic of modern Italians, is fiercest in revolt against the sterile realism of the north.

Gabriele D'Annunzio

With an imaginative energy far beyond any dramatist of his age, D'Annunzio holds the struggling spirit of the modern Italian movement in a series of extraordinary plays. Here is the movement and colour of the Renaissance, delight in rare beauties, in the glory of sculpture, in the infinite sweetness and pain of life consumed like incense. Here the ancient storehouses of art are rifled, and their glories, 'innumerable as the leaves fallen from a fabulous forest,' strewn across his drama. Here the spirit of a cardinal art stirs in her sleep, and half-waking, flings a fold of her garment over the work of her latest son. But here also is the weakness that crept in with the pessimism of the north. Hating ugliness and mediocrity, he sought colour and light at any cost. His dramatic power is slight: he makes up for it by an exaggeration of the dramatic moment, and a weight of melody. To these he sacrificed the perfection of form, the restrained power of his country's tradition: he is at the same time heir and traitor. Take his earliest work. The *Sogno d'un tramonto di Autunno* has the qualities of his strength and of his weakness; exquisite diction, the glory of the earth, the beauty of the body, and with these, an insistence on the desire of the senses that loses by over-emphasis. Sensation usurps the place of dramatic power. The anguish of unsatisfied desire is all its content. The Dogaressa Gradeniga has held joy in her hands, and but tasted it, before Pantea, the beautiful courtesan, snatched her love from her. She summons a slave woman, famed as a magician, to help her to murder her rival. While they talk, a train of barges passes down the river at the garden's edge. Among them is the one in which Pantea lies in the glory of Cleopatra. The people crowded on the shore shout at the sight of it. Pantea appears naked on the prow, and the crowd, maddened, rush at her barque. In the fight that follows a fire breaks out, and while the people cry 'Pantea, Pantea' her boat is driven past the Dogaressa's garden, a moving flame. That is all: desire, and the beauty of words.

Take a later play, *La Gioconda*, written 'for Eleonora Duse of the beautiful hands.' A weak-willed sculptor is torn between his passion for Gioconda, a model in whose loveliness is all the mystery of art, and the love of Silvia, his wife, whose beauty of soul holds his adoration. He attempts suicide, and it is Silvia's care that saves him. With returning strength, desire for Gioconda consumes him again. Silvia confronts her; and the two women contend, the one for his soul, the other for his life. Blind with fury, Gioconda rushes to shatter his masterpiece. There is a struggle behind a curtain; then a 'lacerating cry from Silvia, torn by agony from her very vitals.'

Gioconda rushes out, and a moment later Silvia emerges, her hands crushed by the falling statue, wrapped in a cloth through which the blood is oozing. Before she faints, her 'dying voice' moans—'It—is safe.' The effect is supreme. It is completed by the final vision of Silvia, deserted by her husband, trying to embrace her child with maimed arms. This is sensation raised to the highest power, the work of a master of dramatic imposters. Withal, the play is set to music, the beauty of Silvia's hands its recurring motive. When they are gone, some one says—'In her way of moving there is a sense of something wanting calling up a vague image of clipped wings.' Nothing more—and in it a vision of her tortured life and wasted sacrifice that not a hundred wails could have expressed.

D'Annunzio has the desire to create, and the vision of an artist, without the power that restrains power. He is a passionate weakling, heaping up strange beauties and terrible joys to hide his weakness. That is why his drama is a series of effects, where it should be a perfectly proportioned whole; and his tragedy, mere pain that is not redeemed through graciousness of form. Life does not move obedient to his art: but passion at all costs, effectiveness at all costs, rule his art, the music of his words become the servant of his attitudes. The weakness of the degenerate leads him to ugliness of subject, which the wonder of his style can only partially redeem, since nobility of soul and dramatic genius are not there to inspire and shape it into greatness. *La Citta Morte* sinks under the weight of its own beauty. To make this play, D'Annunzio has torn the past from its tomb and ravaged every art. He takes the matchless lines of the Antigone, the terror of Atreus' doom, its colour from the art of the Renaissance, quivering music that exults and trembles into silence. It is his right: 'You have sent your soul deep down into mystery and beauty, you have drunk poetry at its remotest springs, you have dreamed your dream in the splendour of the highest of accomplished destinies.' Of Bianca he says, 'the quiver of a thousand wings was in her voice.' And later—'All the goodness of the earth and all the beauty—were in her soul. It seemed as if when she awoke every morning all the breath of the spring passed over her soul and melted it and touched it into flower. . . . The smallest of my joys widened in her soul to infinity, like a circle in calm water, until it gave me the illusion of a great felicity. . . . Only a little while ago—only a little while ago—all her tender life trembled in her hair, beneath my hands.' Earth breathes under his touch. 'All the plain of Argos, behind us, was a lake of flame. The mountains were tawny and savage, like lionesses.' But beneath the magic of words, the body of the drama is distorted and evil. Leonardo, working feverishly to unearth the tombs of the Atridæ, is tortured by desire for Bianca, his sister: and Anna, the blind wife of Alessandro, knows by some second-sight of the soul that her husband must love Bianca's beauty as Bianca his strength. So in the terrible thirst and heat of the Mycenæan ruins their unnatural doom works out. The atmosphere is evil—'The earth that he digs in is evil: it must give out the exhalations of monstrous deeds. The curse that weighed on the Atridæ was so deadly that there must have remained some vestige still to be dreaded in the dust that was trodden by them.' D'Annunzio dwells on this infection, delights in it. It is both sign and cause of the weakness of his drama. His work is that of a wonderful decadent, half-god, half-satyr. The very intensity of vision that sweeps the world to glorify his art, debases as often as it glorifies. This is the artist, a pagan valuing grace and power,—

'Allor che su 'l vento mæstrale mi balzava la strofe—
Squillando annanzi, O mare, O mare, O mare!'[1]

But such verse as this is no more than the protest of strained nerves, the feebleness of degeneracy,—

'Sono spogliati tutti i miei rosai
Non più ghirlande! E la mia coppa è vuota.
Bevvi, bevvi e ribevvi. Al fine ignota
Non me nessuna ebrezza. . . .'[2]

He has tried too much; and the marks of exhaustion are on his drama. His later work cannot come before the bar of dramatic criticism at all. But I am loth to leave it thus. Has he not woven words into a tapestry heavy with the glory of the ages? He comes before the dawn, and weary of the grayness, fills the sombre night with beauty,—

'Is it not morning, is it not morning yet?
The stars have all gone down into your hair.'

That is Francesca da Rimini: and again it is the Gabriele D'Annunzio who made her.

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[1] 'Then on the wild wind my song turns, crying with great longing—O sea, O sea, O sea.'

[2] 'Fallen are all my roses: my garlands are no more. My cup is empty. I have drunken, I have drunken, a hundred times! And at the end there is no further ecstasy for me to know.'

It is not among the followers of D'Annunzio that we should look for the future of Italian drama. They make fearful travesties of passion, sodden with blood and harsh with discordant clamour. Apart from these youthful terrorists there is a deepening thoughtfulness among a few later dramatists, whose work is almost a reaction against the purely external beauty of D'Annunzio.

There is also the everyday drama of the popular theatres. In a dramatic survey of this kind, which proceeds from peak to peak, or molehill to molehill, a certain amount of distortion is inevitable. It might be said that the ordinary acting drama of any period has for the critical observer a greater significance than the work of the outstanding few. The latter are as much above the imagination of their age as they are expressive of its highest possibilities. The others, giving back to the popular imagination just a little less than they took from it, are expressive of its average achievement. I do not speak of those plays which in any age have dealt directly with the problems of that age. Nor of the interaction between the state of society and the state of the theatre. That is a different thing. But it is, for instance, significant that Shakespeare was the ordinary acting drama of Elizabethan times. It is true that this significance has been interpreted in a sense unduly flattering to the Elizabethan audience. The unflagging bustle and stir in Shakespeare's plays is apt to be overshadowed in our imagination by their other qualities. Few modern melodramas have a more vigorous external action. Who dares to-day smother the lady with a bolster in full view, or has outdone the shambles at the end of *Hamlet*? It will never be known to what extent the honest Elizabethan citizen merely endured the poetry for the sake of the story. That he did endure it is perhaps significant enough.

Now the ordinary acting drama of modern Italy has hardly more than one theme, love, in the form conveniently labelled illicit. The poorness of the subject is disguised and varied by the treatment. A vivid and beautiful imagery is woven round it: it flames with the incredible fervour of youthful passion: it is a jest for cynical middle-age. Always the action progresses from sharp to sharper effects. A play by G. Rovetta is a series of vivid impressions, scenes snatched from the lives of his characters and set in the most brilliant light. High-born or prostitute, so only that they dance, whether it be on their heads or their heels, is all one to Girolamo Rovetta. R. Bracco adds to some of his plays a feminist philosophy, and to some a show of psychological interest, as in a husband's slow discovery that his wife's suicide was caused by grief for the loss of her lover. The cynicism is sometimes wry-faced. A deceived husband rejoices in the affection shown him by his wife and her lover, quite unconscious that all are laughing at him. Two idealists resolve to keep their love on a lofty spiritual plane, and in the end the lady becomes the mistress of the life-long friend. There are many kinds of adulterous love, but they must all have been exploited in the modern Italian theatre.

E. A. Butti

Those playwrights who have turned away from the pageantry and external conflict of D'Annunzio to attempt the revelation of an inner spiritual conflict have hardly been justified of their courage. E. A. Butti is proud of his idealist philosophy. His *Lucifero* is a drama of the conflict between faith and atheism. It has an intolerant dedication that rules out 'the slaves of preconceived and ready-made phrases.' Giovanni Alberini, gentle sceptic and philosopher, might have been a great character. He soon loses all chance of being a great mind. The play proceeds by appeals to the emotions, until the atheist collapses before the grief of the bereaved son, and faith is shown to be a comforting necessity. So much for atheism. Eugenics fares no better. In *The Utopia,* Dr Serchi, rejecting the marriage ceremony, takes to himself a companion who shares all his views. It is a free union. He believes in the destruction at birth of the crippled and defective, and delivers a lecture on his belief. The town rises against him: he loses his position and goes out to seek the free-minded and enlightened. On his return, disillusioned and unsuccessful, he finds that the child born to him is deformed. And the grief-stricken mother demands not only that the child should be cared for but made legitimate. Dr Serchi is a fanatic, and his creator is not always able to lift him above the innate absurdity of fanaticism. Yet Butti is not without insight and dramatic vision. The ambitious, weak-willed priest of *Fiamme nell' Ombra* and his even weaker sister are good, and the restraint of their final redemption and sacrifice is better. Butti's work is significant: it has not much dramatic intensity nor any approach to D'Annunzio's beauty of language. But at least he is not content with colour and music. His deeper thought is one part of great drama. D'Annunzio's mastery of a glorious language is another. To them both is lacking the highest power that restrains itself within the highest forms.

Pride of heritage is not lacking to any of the younger Italian playwrights, nor that rarer thing, continuity of tradition. The spirit of the Renaissance is not in Italy the alien thing that it is in England. Between modern and Elizabethan England the gulf is impassable. Even Shakespeare is presented to us dressed and stuffed. Of the many attempts to reproduce in modern plays the spirit of that heyday not one has been or could be successful. But the colour and passionate beauty of the Renaissance arts is for the artist of modern Italy not a glorious memory but a part of his personal heritage. It lives in him: he understands it. His spirit burns with the same flame, a consuming adoration for the beauty that passes. Hence the men and women of D'Annunzio's modern settings move in the atmosphere of the fifteenth century, and Francesca da Rimini is trapped and dies in the twentieth. Hence the vivid reality of such a drama as S. Benelli's *Supper of Jests*, set in mediæval Florence. The spendthrift brilliance of colour and poetry and the triumphant irony are subordinated to the telling of a story. The action is swept up to moments of intense excitement, with a single-minded and unfaltering vigour. It is a melodrama for Olympus.

The artistic tradition of modern Italy is more noble than any save the classic in distinction of language, power of vision, beauty of form. 'It sleeps, that antique spirit,' Carducci wrote years ago, 'it sleeps but is not dead; and as a sleeper wakes, so shall it wake, and to a new day.' Already it has stirred, smiling at the beauty of its dream.

SPAIN

Spanish dramatists are making their way towards a national drama almost untouched by the restless spirit that stirred Italy. Their conception of life is singularly simple. In Italy a revolt against the forms of modern life; in France, with the exception of Brieux, cynical and witty ridicule of folly; in England, save from the Celtic Shaw, no very savage indignation; in the north generally, a dramatic view of life limited to social institutions and conditions; in Russia, a doubt of the value of life itself. But Spanish dramatists, with the rare exception of Dicenta, are not in revolt against anything, least of all against life. Even Echegaray is a melodramatist at heart, revelling in the duty murders of Calderon's plays of Honour. The Quintero brothers are purely Spanish: writers of the comedias de capa y espada, with the woman, her lover, and the grim father, brother or husband. An ingenious plot, witty dialogue, a careful arrangement of cross-purposes, a deft use of episodes and surprise, are the essentials of this lightest of Spanish drama. Its highest tradition is one of realism, not the imitative realism of the modern stage, but delight in the creation of brave action, noble emotion, vivid character. Fantasy and poetry, brilliant or sombre, the development and unravelling of plot, technical perfection, are its distinctive qualities. Inequality of power, reckless form, exaggerated effect are its worst faults. If its writers do not make life greater, they make it richer and fuller. With the poetic drama of the symbolic school the Spanish audience has little sympathy. It has been tried, and it failed. Their interest is in humanity, and humanity a little braver, a little nobler than it is. This tradition of a fuller realism the modern Spanish theatre has never quite lost, and now in Benavente is re-achieving.

Throughout the modern period the influence of the French society drama fought with this memory. A little, and but very little, of the problem drama has mingled with it, a side issue, always subordinate to an ineradicable love of the dramatic moment and the conventional emotions of the age of chivalry.

José Echegaray

Echegaray is typical of these years of confusion. He wrote over sixty plays. Among them are comedies after the fashion of Scribe and Dumas, some with a grace beyond their reach. There are also tragedies, in the tradition of Calderon—not the highest Spanish tradition. Their characters, like those of Calderon, move at the bidding of the morality and convention recognised as fitting in a given set of circumstances. Calderon, being a courtier of the seventeenth century, did not escape the taint of strained speech and emotion. In the place of Lope de Vega's throbbing reality, he offered a pageant of abstract emotions, chief among them an exalted Honour. And it is from him that Echegaray takes his tradition, with a sense of the theatre rarely equal to his, and far less of poetic brilliance.

To these comedies after Dumas and tragedies after Calderon, Echegaray, politician, scientist, mathematician, added a curious problem drama. He was influenced by the work of the French Naturalists: one of his plays is founded directly on a part of *Salammbô*. He observed, dissected, attempting the dispassionate faithfulness of the Théâtre Libre. His study of social questions and psychological cases is a mixture of that theatre's adherence to the document, and of the mechanical analysis of Scribe and Dumas. Not content with thus destroying the purity of the problem drama, he further complicated it by clinging to his traditional desire for terrific scenes and moving passions. He made of *Ghosts* a horrid melodrama. Imagination, fancy, audacity, true and forced, jostle scientific observation and notebook accuracy. These dramatic medleys form the greater part of his plays, their characters too often the puppets of an imaginary psychology. He attempted too much: the creation of the complex characters of modernity in the spirit of the highest tradition is not for him; it requires a greater dramatist. His problems are badly filled out with passion and poetry: their effects are too often cheap, and the verse of such as are nearest traditional form is too often banal and crude. His worship of the document, struggling with his love of striking situation and exceptional character, has destroyed both. Scientific accuracy is lost: poetic and emotional effect weakened, and the power to create character sometimes entirely lacking. Tradition and emotion predominate in these plays. Echegaray has no social drama, as we know it: not even in *De mala raza*. Here, the heroine's evil ancestry is dragged out by Don Prudencio, worshipper of Darwin. But the plot turns on an honour theme: which is a man's greater duty, that to his wife, or to his father? It would seem almost impossible for a southern dramatist to limit his realism to the imitation of a suburban household and keep his problem free from the movement of life. But in spite of this natural advantage, many of Echegaray's plays are extremely bad.

Of these three kinds in his drama, the light comedies are most successful. Their construction is delightfully smooth, their dialogue witty and natural. The influence of the French society drama is strong, but the tiresome aridity of Scribe is replaced by a keen sense of reality.

In the plays according to tradition this is lost in a sense of emotional effect, always approaching the melodramatic. *O Locura O Santidad* (*Folly or Saintliness*) may be taken as typical. It is the old story of a nurse's son adopted by the rich childless couple. Don Lorenzo, father of the hysterical Inés, is this foundling. On her death-bed Juana, the nurse, claims him, with the help of the customary 'old papers.' Eduardo, son of the Duchess of Almonte, brings his stately mother to ask for Inés's hand. Don Lorenzo declines the offer on the score of his shameful birth. His family suspect madness. The dying Juana, sufficiently recovered to wander about the house in an extraordinary way, burns the old papers, and their absence confirms the suspicion. It is as well: the Duchess will not consent to the marriage, and Inés is dying of grief all over the stage. These noble people are very tiresome, and their anguish extremely painful. The torments of Lorenzo and the wails of Inés, hysterical angel, end in his seizure by the keepers of an asylum. It is impossible to say which is our dominant emotion, uneasy boredom, or a sort of shame at the play's lack of restraint.

In most of these plays the construction is more ambitious and less successful than in the comedies. What life a gloomy romanticism leaves in them is murdered at the point of honour. Tricks after the fashion of the misdirected letter are everywhere, and the emotions of jealousy and honour are almost sole dramatic props. Take one of these—*Algunas veces aqui*—a prose drama, tolerably successful on the stage. Rafæl, son of Dorotea, is about to marry Amparo, daughter of Beatrix. Don Estaban, his grandfather, forbids the marriage. He declares that Rafæl's father, Claudio, under a false name made vain advances to Beatrix and killed her husband. When Don Estaban tells Beatrix that Rafæl is the son of her husband's murderer, she becomes exalted and refuses to have him as son-in-law. Dorotea therewith confesses to the indispensable Don Estaban that Rafæl is not Claudio's son, but the child of a former lover. To Rafæl she gives the inevitable letter, and he, after rejoicing that he is not a murderer's son, is also exalted. He refuses to reveal his mother's dishonour, and in his turn repulses Beatrix and Amparo. Hereafter, Dorotea's shame and remorse, and Amparo's intrigues for possession of the decisive letter. And since it is now the third act, Dorotea ends where she might have begun. She tells Beatrix the truth, and dies exhausted. Beatrix, with tardy generosity, assures Rafæl that all good actions are rewarded, and hands him Amparo.

In spite of scenes of real charm, this form of drama is almost intolerable to English minds. It is easy to point out its crude ingenuity; but beyond that what can be said, except that it follows an honourable tradition, and is often not unworthy in grace and passion. There is *En el seno de la muerte* (*In the bosom of death*). A shadow follows the love of Beatrix and Manfredo, the shadow of Don Jaime, her husband. They believe him killed at the defence of the castle he is holding against France. He appears, and unsuspicious, pours out his love for Beatrix. But tragedy stirs in the dim vaults of the château, and the tragic legend told at the feast is its forewarning. Through a woman's hatred of Manfredo, the truth comes into the hands of the King of Aragon. While Beatrix implores death, and her lover cries aloud his unrepentant passion, he gives to the man death, and to the woman a convent. Jaime, uncomprehending, first offers his lands to save them, and then insults the king. He is told the truth. Beaten, he craves his lord's pardon and one grace: to be left with the lovers in the vault of the castle. The secret door shuts, and they are left alone to die. Manfredo dies by his own hand, and after him Jaime stabs himself. But Beatrix's arms are round him and her tears on his face as he dies. The verse of this drama is firm, in places almost noble. There is power and beauty in it: there is also the grace of an older age. At times the pathos fails, the power sinks: but on the whole fair tragedy and fine romance. Its weakness is that of all these plays, an insistence on conventional emotion that sometimes brings the characters near abstract qualities. Calderon left an evil heritage.

This is, even to-day, the characteristic tragedy of Spain; not the misery of social conditions but the burden of human passion. Echegaray is in the tradition: his plays, sometimes ill-constructed, their emotion strained to absurdity, have at their best not a little truth to humanity. At their worst, they have neither restraint nor truth, the characters mere passion-tossed puppets. Every one of these dramas falls short of greatness: yet they have in them a sense of life that would prove the Spanish drama not decadent, but waiting the master-hand to gather up a glorious tradition and fill it with a wider modern life, a more complex faith.

By far the greater number of Echegaray's plays belong to his hybrid problem drama. French influence is responsible for much; for their lack of spontaneity, their mechanical discussion and their incredible psychology. *El Gran Galeoto* has all these things, with the usual discovery of the virtuous wife in another man's rooms. But there are moments of astonishing vitality, as at the end when their hopeless position drives two innocent people into acceptance of the slander.

> ERNEST: Yes: now you are right. I will confess now. Do you want passion? Then passion and delirium. Do you want love? Then more and more. Nothing daunts me. Yours the invention, I give it shelter. So you may tell the tale. It echoes through all this heroic town. But should any one ask you who was the infamous intermediary in this infamy, you will reply 'ourselves without being aware of it, and with us the stupid chatter of busy bodies.' Come, Teodora, my mother's spirit kisses your pure brow. She belongs to me, and let heaven choose its day to judge between you and me. (Gathers Teodora into his embrace with a glance of defiance around.)

Dumas again is responsible for the creation of such characters as Mariana. Her passion is romantically conventional, her self-exposition intolerably modern. She tortures the honest man who loves her, and explains that her nature was warped in London, by her mother's sufferings with her lover, Don Felix Alverado. She plays the coquette like a courtesan trying to demand a higher price: angry with Daniel for going to his dying father when he was to take her to a masked ball: finally marrying a middle-aged general and dragging the action to a murderous end. Occasionally interesting, even moving, she is most often merely hysterical and annoying. It is partly the fault of her author's peculiarly mixed system of psychology.

When he mingles problem and tradition the effect is worse. The point of honour is absurd to a degree; the construction thoroughly crude and unnatural; the passion incredible, and the catastrophe exasperating in its futility. The mechanical nature of his problems is the final touch of unreality in these plays. Social drama, ill at ease in a Spanish atmosphere, hides in melodrama, gloomy and undisciplined. Take *El Hijo de Don Juan* (*The Son of Don Juan*), a pathological monstrosity entirely devoid of restraint. It is little more than a hideous catastrophe, and the place for it is the annals of a medical society. This pitiless exhibition of madness and disease is not drama nor inspiration: it is a formless exploitation of sin and misery. It feeds on its own power, and has nothing to give but an exhausted relief for its ending. From the first melancholy orgy of the three old roués, the depression grows; while the nervous strain tells on Lazarus' enfeebled system; while he learns his fate from the unwitting Bermudez; while he drinks with Paca of Tarifeno, his father's old mistress, and plans to carry off Carmen, victim of consumption and her father's sins. His mind darkens: all the world has grown black save one ring of light round Carmen's pale face; in his madness the sands of the desert mix themselves with the darkness; he will count, count, count, and before he passes into the desert, implores of her a little water. His madness grows: he pushes her away and calls his mother. Recalling his childhood, he repulses his father, and Don Juan's agony is intolerable. He sends away his mother, saying that she abandoned him to the loneliness of his college life. He would drink again with Paca, and Don Juan sees his old sins wakening in this haunted house of shame. With the last ray of light he drags Carmen to the balcony to see the dawn. Then he opens his eyes on madness and Ibsen. 'Most beautiful, most beautiful, mother—give me the sun.' The agony is drawn out over a few more lines, and the curtain falls on his idiot cry. Here is neither power of form, nor the inspiration of tragedy. This play stands to *Ghosts* as a melodrama to the sculptured beauty of a classic tragedy.

We have given this much attention to the work of Echegaray, not for its value, which is less than that of drama more briefly dealt with, but because it is typical of the transition stage of Spanish drama. It is the meeting point of the influences, foreign and national, that rent it during the early years of the modern period. Its very weakness is partly the result of the chaos. Passion, strained to the negation of passion; characters made shadowy by their psychological confusion, jerked on the wires of the problem: these are the worst things of Echegaray's drama. Some one in *Folly or Saintliness* says—'Ah, Lorenzo, Lorenzo—you are everything—philosopher, moralist, jurisconsult, and needless to say—gentleman. Everything, miserable thinking machine, except a father.' Too many of Echegaray's characters are such 'miserable thinking machines,' lifeless and meaningless. Where his work is bad, it is viciously bad: futile violence and jealousy, frenzy and wearisome exaltations, savage clutchings at sensation, forced situations, due half to an exaggeration of Calderon's dangerous bequest; half to a meddlesome realism from the drama of the north. At his best, music of verse, a grace and beauty not unworthy the past, and the need, ever felt, for the ennobling of life. His failure is not the decadent betrayal of a glorious heritage, but the failure of a creative intellect, defeated by a task beyond its strength. He belongs to the confusion of yesterday: he has little value for modernity save to remind it of its swaddling clothes.

Jacinto Benavente

The future chose another prophet. The work of Jacinto Benavente is in the highest tradition of the Spanish drama, and a symbol of its promise. The creative genius of Lope de Vega informed his vision of reality with the fullest active and emotional life. To his country's drama he left a tradition of suppleness; skilful construction; splendour of movement and music; living, distinctive characters. Only a new creative activity could give fresh life to his pageant of emotion and colour, filling it with the more complex life of modernity, taking the highest from past and present, and making it afresh for the new age.

For the one dramatic form, Benavente has gone near accomplishing the task. His comedies have exquisite fantasy, poetic grace, technical perfection, and intellectual distinction. Where they fail is in an occasional careless handling of their finest qualities: poetry becomes sounding verse, fantasy overshadows reality, to the marring of dramatic proportion. Take *Los Intereses Creados*, played in London as *The Bias of the World*. The atmosphere is perfectly suggested. An ironical side-glance at life gives depth and colour to the charm of the fantasy. Behind Harlequin and Columbine, the Captain and Punchinello, a countless multitude of mocking, graceful shadows grow more dim and stately as thought follows them down the years. The picaresque novel has given of its life and movement to the figure of Crispin, valet, vagabond, philosopher, weaver of subtle stratagems to save his own and his master's skin. He is the intellect of the play, his introspective genius its criticism of life. Passion here is not allowed to shatter the delicate form: the bitter-sweet love-making of Leandro and Silvia is subdued to the imaginative beauty of the whole. It is the play of Crispin. He and Leandro, his master, come penniless to an inn. His spirit demands of life only that it should be a continual provocation to imaginative daring. So he imagines bravely: he favours the Captain and Harlequin the poet, giving them money from the trustful innkeeper. Then to the inn come Dora Sirena and Columbine, her maid, penniless adventurers after his heart. His conference with them is much of a soliloquy; Crispin conversing with his philosophic being. His lies save his noble master's morality from the taint of falsehood, a virtuous and honourable achievement.

'We have all within ourselves a great and splendid gentleman of lofty hopes and towering ideals, capable of everything that is noble and everything that is good—and by his side a humble servant born to forlorn hopes and miserable and hidden things, who employs himself in the basest actions to which we are enforced by life. The art of living is so to separate the two that when we fall into any ignominy we can always say: It was not my fault: it was not I. It was my servant. . . . We should despise ourselves too much if we did not believe that we are better than our lives.'

His present plan includes Dora Sirena. She is giving a ball to which she has invited Silvia, daughter of the rich Punchinello. If she invites Leandro, the two will fall in love, and Silvia's money will pay everyone's debts. They do meet and love, but the morality of the high-born compels him to confess. It is all one: he is already found out, mockery and threats overwhelm him; Punchinello, the Innkeeper, and Pantaloon, Harlequin and the Captain, surround him, and Crispin's appeal is the triumph of his genius and of the play. They silence him. A Doctor of Law has arrived from Bologna with three thousand two hundred pages of a process begun there against them. The room is filled with the papers and the Doctor's sonorous lunacy.

'Justice is all wisdom, and wisdom is all order, and order is all reason, and reason is all procedure, and procedure is all logic.'

As he proceeds the angry creditors see that all their money will go in fees, since justice must be paid for, and the guilty ones are penniless. They implore Crispin to talk down the Doctor: he tells them scornfully that if they had listened to him before, Leandro would have married Silvia and paid his debts. This appeals even to the Doctor. Silvia insists on the marriage; Punchinello, overwhelmed by argument and protests from every side, must perforce give way, and all are saved. Only Crispin goes his way: he will live dangerously, or not at all. This is more than exquisite dialogue, more than fantasy in perfect form: it is an artistic criticism of life, the highest form of comedy; a criticism of the world in which the noble must needs save himself by the baser, where love and morality are pawns in the game of the masters of life. And through it all, beneath the grace in which it clothes itself, is the pulse of creative life.

In his tragedies, Benavente, the fierce enemy of false thinking, the reformer and iconoclast, cannot always hold his naked hate and anger from tearing in pieces the dramatic fitness of speech and character. The short measure of the dramatist is filled up by the preacher. So that not all the radiant beauty of style, nor the clear deep of passion, nor the tenderness, can carry his tragedies to the peaks that first catch the sun. Yet he does fly, and the wings are the wings of a god.

His first play—*Gente Conocida* (*Familiar Faces*)—was a satire on the habits of the upper classes. The words have the thrust and glint which marks his dialogue throughout. This early work is not blurred by crudeness, and already he is very nearly master of the irony and philosophic insight that light up not one aspect of life alone, but all life and all the striving of men. *Los Malhechores del Bien* (*Evil-doers of good*), an attack on the hypocrisy and pietic froth of the clergy is at once more bitter and more sure. In all his plays the satire is a terrible sword, beaten and tempered by his fierce indignation, and used without fear or shrinking. Even the fantasy of *Los Intereses Creados* flames here and there.

'We shall stone his house, we shall rase the whole city. . . . There is an uplift, a moral earnestness in a crowd.'

'If you hadn't had me at your side you would have starved yourself to death out of pure conscientiousness. Ah, do you suppose if I had thought for a moment that you were a man of another sort, I would have been satisfied to devote your abilities to love? . . No, I would have put you into politics.'

'The intelligence is the conscience of truth, and the man who parts with that, among the lies of this life is as one who has lost himself.'

The other side of the dramatist's passionate indignation is love, love towards the oppressed, the thwarted and the maimed of life. As he hates injustice so he loves justice and freedom. He sees the world set free through the power of love, touching all things that suffer with pitiful fingers. But pain and injustice are not only for wailing or mad outcry. In the crowding life of his plays they take their place as one of the burdens that man's stupidity binds heavier on his fellows even as he struggles to free himself. Men are to be pitied, but they are also to be loved. Through the dynamic force of love they will be set free, not from pain, but from despair and the isolation of defeat.

'These puppets have all been moved by plain and obvious strings, like men and women in the farces of our lives—strings which were their interests, their passions, and all the illusions and petty miseries of their state. Some are pulled by the feet to lives of restless and weary wandering, some by the hands to toil with pain, to struggle with bitterness, to strike with cunning, to slay with violence and rage. But into the hearts of all there descends sometimes from heaven an invisible thread, as if it were woven out of the sunlight and the moonbeams, the invisible thread of love, which makes these men and women, as it does these puppets which seem like men, almost divine, and brings to our foreheads the smile and splendour of the dawn, lends wings to our drooping spirits, and whispers to us still that this farce is not all a farce, that there is something noble, something divine in our lives which is true and which is eternal and which shall not close when the farce of life shall close.'

It must be said that there is in Benavente a divine sanity which does not often allow the poet to overwhelm the dramatist, and insists always that it is better to understand life, even if to understand be to suffer, than to take her loveliness to build a dead city of the arts.

This is his power: the artistic activity that criticises life in creating it. By this path the drama of Spain must go, if it would justify the height of its great argument. Regard the extraordinary vitality of the popular theatre to-day if you would realise with what vast strides it has already gone. One-act plays of the most delicate workmanship, of the broadest humour, or of a fairy-like fantasy abound. Here is one that depends entirely on the dialogue between a beautiful young girl and a young man. And that dialogue is at once so natural, so deft, and so spirited that from a trifle is made a small master-work. Here another, gossamer-woven, of Pierrot and Columbine, wherein the jesting philosophy but serves to keep the heaven-born puppets on earth. Here another, farce holding its sides in a company of comic characters created with the audacity of youth. All depend on the perfection of their craftsmanship, and all are filled to the brim with life, and quick with intellectual vigour.

Less than a century ago, in 1836, Larra saw Madrid a vast burial ground, and wrote—'The Theatre! "Here rests the Spanish genius!" Not a flower, not a record, not an inscription! . . . I sought violently to find some way out of the horrible graveyard. I tried to take refuge in my own heart, full a little while ago of illusions and desire. Oh, heavens! yet another grave! My heart, too, holds only the dead. What is written on it, and who lies therein? Terrible inscription! "Here lies hope!" 'Oh, silence, silence!'

From this vast despair, born of its country's discord, how far now has Spanish literature come, and Spanish drama with it. How far, remembering the past, mastering the present, may it now go. Already, in the comedy of Benavente hope and achievement touch hands.

Towards the Dawn

We have seen, imperfectly, the course of the realist drama of the north, of the dramatic reaction against it, and the new life of the drama in Italy and Spain. It is clear that the dominant drama, the drama that has counted in European thought, has been one of realism. Signs are not wanting of a change. When Ibsen altered the whole course of dramatic realism, his influence left practically untouched the drama of Russia. Always realists, and that in the profoundest sense, her writers met him as equals, respected, admired, and passed on. It is now in Russia that we find the most significant drama of modern realism.

Anton Tchekhov

The drama of Anton Tchekhov is concerned, not with the facts of everyday life, but with life itself, its value and its meaning. Whereas Tolstoy and Gorki sought the meaning in an ideal of life that a social revolution might accomplish, Tchekhov reached deeper, to question the value of life, to criticise its forms. In this, his dramatic ideal differs from that of the drama of ideas. Mr Shaw, master of that form, criticises not life, but manners: the drama of ideas, as a whole, criticises conditions: its value is, in consequence, constantly decreasing. Its present importance, being a question of a knowledge of conditions, is limited by the quality of the intellect behind it as much as by the quality of dramatic art in its expression. At best, it is not reality but a phase of reality. The drama of Tchekhov is the only modern realism that has attempted a vision of reality. For reality is not a matter of facts: it is a matter of artistic conception. In the strictest sense of the term, art creates life. Life is an artist's vision of it. For this purpose, intellect is not sufficient. Beyond intellect, greater than intellect, it needs the supreme creative activity that makes order in the disorder confronting an untutored vision of life, that is compelled to interpret what it sees, because mastery and interpretation are the first necessity of its existence. Ibsen had such a power: he interpreted the life of small towns in the light of humanity. Alone of those who have succeeded him in the way of realism, Tchekhov has the same creative need. In his plays of the Russian 'intellectuals' he sought to express the rhythm of life. His men and women are types of humanity, questioning, enduring, rarely mastering life. They hope or despair, but always life itself is the measure of their being. They reject the ease of mental and spiritual sloth. They know that to strive is to suffer, and that it is better to suffer than not to strive and not to understand.

'The bands are playing so gaily, so bravely, and one does so want to live. O, my God. Time will pass on and we shall depart for ever, we shall be forgotten: they will forget our faces, voices, and even how many there were of us, but our sufferings will turn into joy for those who will live after us, happiness and peace will reign on earth, and people will remember with kindly words, and bless those who are living now. . . . It seems that in a little while we shall know why we are living, why we are suffering. If we could only know, if we could only know' (*The Three Sisters*).

Further, Tchekhov had a rare understanding of the relation of life and art. He saw life in the average realist drama a mean and narrow thing; and knew that its debasement implied the debasement of art. For the artist creates life, and the forms of life, and if the thing he creates be weak and valueless, his art and the forms of his art are like unto it. Even so, the form of the modern suburban drama befits the value of its content: it is poor-spirited, it means nothing to humanity, it steals and defaces life. Against the paltry conception and worse execution of this late realism, Tchekhov flung an artist's scorn of incompetence. Treplieff protests in *The Seagull.* 'The theatre is merely the vehicle of convention and prejudice. When the curtain rises on that little three-walled room, when those mighty geniuses, those high priests of art, show us people in the act of eating, drinking, loving, walking, and wearing their coats, and attempt to extract a moral fit for household use, from their insipid talk; when playwrights give us under a thousand different guises the same, same, same old stuff, then I must needs run from it, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower that was about to crush him by its vulgarity.' Tchekhov's own drama attempts a new form: it is hardly successful, and in consequence his new conception of life hardly realised. But the vision is there, and the movement of life: to be ignored or understood, and once understood to be for ever held.

At best, the distinction of Tolstoi's peasants and Gorki's outcasts is the distinction of a dream and a spirit that come from the dramatist himself. In themselves, they have no more value for drama than the maundering peasants and cursing outcasts of the average hovel and doss-house play. Tchekhov, artist where Tolstoi and Gorki were merely idealists, knew that distinctive characters are the first necessity of a great play. The people of his drama come from the educated classes of the provinces; they have intellect, and artistic capacity or imaginative charm. Their ideas are in advance of the civilisation of Europe; their capacity for feeling and understanding is at once the promise of strength and a threat of weakness. Tchekhov wrote during the worst years of the nineteenth century, when their life was incredibly hopeless. Enslaved by the slavery of a lower class, they could do nothing to lift themselves or the people. The death of Alexander II ended a period of high hope and activity. The glorious movement of young people, the effort of the 'intellectuals' to put their knowledge at the service of a revolution, were crushed out. The eighties were a horrible chaos of despair and treachery. The intellectuals were driven back on themselves, and the aimless monotony of the life in this old Russia—'The people here do no more than eat, drink, sleep, and die. Others are born who eat, drink, and sleep in their turn; and lest boredom should destroy them altogether, they seek change in scandal, vodka, cards, and intrigue. . . . Wives are unfaithful to their husbands and the husbands lie and pretend they have seen nothing. The vulgar tradition descends upon the children, clouding their minds until the spark of divinity within them is extinguished, and they grow up to be just such pitiable, trivial, commonplace corpses as their fathers and mothers were before them. Shame upon such a life!'

Tchekhov's drama is a cry from the heart of their despair. The younger men came from college to their estates, hopes and ideals high, determined to lift the misery of the people by their own efforts. For a time they struggled, then slowly the apathy and meanness of the life round them choked strength and energy out of them. Opposition might have saved them: indifference gave them despair and [illegible]

They lost faith in themselves, finally in their ideals. After that, only the terrible weariness of eternal card-parties, the feeble desire for life and the bitter realisation of impotence. Listen to Ivanoff,—

> 'I was young once: I have been eager and sincere and intelligent. I have loved and hated and believed as no one else has. I have worked and hoped and tilted against windmills with the strength of ten—not sparing my strength, not knowing what life was. I shouldered a load that broke my back. I drank, I worked, I excited myself, my energy knew no bounds. Tell me, could I have done otherwise? There are so few of us, and so much to do, so much to do! And see how cruelly fate has avenged herself on me, who fought with her so bravely! I am a broken man. I am old at thirty. I have submitted myself to old age. With a heavy head and a sluggish mind, weary, used up, discouraged, without faith or love, or an object in life, I wander like a shadow among other men, not knowing why I am alive or what it is that I want. Love seems to me to be folly, caresses false. I see no sense in working or playing, and all passionate speeches seem insipid and tiresome. So I carry my sadness with me wherever I go; a cold weariness, a discontent, a horror of life. Before you stands a man who at thirty-five is disillusioned, wearied by fruitless effort, burning with shame, and mocking at his own weakness.'

Failure as Ivanoff is, he has rebelled. That is his distinction and his profound interest. It is the interest and distinction of all Tchekhov's characters. They have failed: but they were worth saving, and have spent their strength in the vain effort.

This protest and continual struggle is the spirit that informs Tchekhov's vision of life. His dramatic method suggests it very incompletely. The atmosphere of the plays is perfect in their sense of despair and futile effort. Their technique is new: the characters wander across the stage in the inconsequent fashion of life, talking perpetually. They are constantly interrupted and drift away, but the talk goes on. It is excellent; the distinctive speech of cultured, thoughtful people. Gradually a vision of them shapes itself from their conversation, intimate, of intense interest. Beyond them a vision of life unrolls from their words and slow self-revelation. Behind the individual man is humanity and the vision of humanity. The past conditions him, the future calls him: his present mastery or submission to the past are making the years to come. Strife is born of this ceaseless need of the future to free itself from the past. Life *is* this continued struggle, its confusion given coherence and value by an understanding of its eternal creative need. Only in this effort towards the highest ideal he knows may a man solve the problem of life. Himself, his use of his inheritance, determine his future and the future of humanity. Then what is failure, provided the protest has been made in all the strength of will and action? Some such vision is the significance of all Tchekhov's plays. There is *The Seagull*. Here the mediocre art that imitates life is opposed to the activity of the creative mind. The egoism of success, the life that sponges on life, the discipline of pain are here, in the selfishness of Arkadina, famous actress, the weak mischief wrought by Trigorin, and the final victory of Nina. And above the waste of fine lives and brave effort is the sense of a triumphant activity that creates new forms in destroying old. The artist dies, but life and art, the spirit of life, change and are re-created without end.

The characters of *The Seagull*, as of all the plays, elude our grasp. A subtle weakness, which is half want of technical skill, half a distrust of life, destroys their complete reality. In their fragmentary talk the rhythm of their lives and of all life is but half-articulate. Take *Uncle Vanya.* It is another story of lost effort. For years Sonia, daughter of Serebrakoff, and Voitski, her uncle, have toiled on her father's estate, wasting youth and strength to keep up his position as Professor. He is utterly selfish, taking their slavery as his right, wearing out Helena, his second wife, with his ceaseless demands. When it is too late, Voitski sees the uselessness of the sacrifice and tries to shoot himself. He is prevented, and an agony of shame is added to his misery. When Helena and her husband come to the estate, her beauty destroys Sonia's poor dream of happiness. And with their return to St Petersburg, the terrible despair of disillusion falls on the two left behind. They turn again to the weary slavery of the past; and Sonia's resignation is almost intolerably sad.

'We shall live, Uncle Vanya. We shall live through the long procession of days before us; we shall patiently bear the trials that fate imposes on us; we shall work for others without rest, both now and when we are old; and when our last hour comes, we shall meet it humbly, and there beyond the grave we shall say that we have suffered and wept, that our life was bitter, and God will have pity on us. . . . We shall rest—we shall rest.'

The terrible waste of life is in this play, and the loneliness in which the souls of all men move, and the deathless courage of the spirit of man. But it is ill-realised. Throughout, the words are uneasy in their sense of so much unsaid. It is as though the characters struggled to free themselves from the sound of their speech; for a moment they come to the verge of clear revelation, and in a moment slip back into the shadows. Their intense anxiety to be clear deepens the sense of effort; they are near and unapproachable. Tchekhov's is the imagination of an artist; his craftsmanship never comparable with that of dramatists far less important.

This, their technical weakness, is the first reason for the comparative failure of his plays. The second is a weakness of spirit. Tchekhov's need to solve the problem of life carried him further than the same need carried Tolstoi and Gorki. They were satisfied with their answers. Tchekhov is not: he is wise enough to know that there is no answer; artist enough to accept the truth and attempt to subdue it to the forms of art, but the disillusion that follows on such knowledge demands supreme strength. Tchekhov's art, exhausted by its struggle with life, by the weight of the despair and misery it shouldered, has no such supreme power. The creative genius that makes the greatness of his drama wearies itself against a distrust of life. The result is a want of dramatic grasp, the passing weakness of doubt, the perpetual weakness of divided effort. In *The Three Sisters*, when the hope that flamed so swiftly has sunk down in the darkness, Irima cries through her anguish. 'There will come a time when everybody will know why, for what purpose there is all this suffering, and there will be no more mysteries. . . .' But Tchekhov does not himself believe this. His faith is a desperate shrinking from unfaith, his hope rooted in utter hopelessness.

The Cherry Orchard is the only play that suggests the coming of new life into the exhausted provinces. It is also the least convincing in its faith, the clearest in its disillusion. Lophakhin alone has any power to shape his future or see the possibility of change; and he mistrusts and is almost ashamed of himself. Beyond the hope and effort of youth, the dramatist sees the inevitable failure, the decay of life even now in the germ. Some one speaks of the great misfortune. 'What great misfortune?' 'The Liberation.' The old life is incapable of change, the new hurries on, hopeful because it is ignorant. In no other play is Tchekhov so hopeless, so unable to see beyond disillusion to the last undying reality.

Nevertheless, he has seen. He knows that life itself is perpetual discontent, with no peace attainable. The value of his drama lies in the courage with which, for the most part, it faces and masters disillusion. Its broken rhythm holds the meaning of life: effort, new life, decay, and fresh creative effort. With that, an understanding that art suffers as life is degraded, that the creative activity constantly changing life must shatter the old forms of art to find expression for the new spirit. Because he had the vision, and because he protested, in the distinction of his characters and speech, in his drama's unresting note of revolt against surrender to worn-out forms of life and art, Tchekhov is a great artist. He is not a great dramatist, but his plays, faulty as they are, lie on the threshold of the future.

There are no other dramatists in Russia to follow him. Among the younger writers some have turned to an uncompromising realism, without plot or philosophy or dramatic power. Their plays are of no worth either as art or drama, their sole unity the insistence on an idea. And that idea, only occasionally present, is for the most part of as little value as that of Yushkievitch in *Dina Glank,* the study of a Jewish family intent on the supreme importance of bread and butter.

With this barren realism there is the worthless symbolism of playwrights such as Chirikov, and the undramatic dreams of Chulkov and Brusov. The problem of life exists for these men as it did for Tchekhov; and they could not be content to deal only with social conditions. But they have turned aside from the answer, hiding from strife or defeat in a feeble self-illusion. They blink like owls and dream of the dawn. Brusov has a play in which a handful of men, all that are left of the human race, are living shut up in a vast hall. They have never seen the sun, but some among them, half by instinct, half by tradition, believe vaguely in a great radiance outside the walls. They persuade the others to break through the roof, and all perish in the downrushing light.

These dreamers are in curious rebellion against the fatigue of living. They are not only unable to live joyfully, but they shrink from all contact with striving, incomplete life. They desire an impossible isolation, to withdraw themselves from the herd into an egocentric universe. They agonise with the pain of merely living and loving. Love is torture. To the devil with this love! It is true that every step taken in the company of a fellow-creature binds a man by just so much to the common life and the accepted order. It is true that love makes a demand upon self that exhausts and again fetters. It is true that free love is every whit as tiresome as married love. The beloved must be thrust out at dawn to satisfy the restless craving for freedom. In Yartsev's *At the Convent*, a woman tells her lover—'You are my God until the day breaks: at dawn you must slip away like the magic night. In the glare of day we should not know each other: there would be only two slaves struggling in the coils of life.' But is it not futile to expect love to be free in the sense demanded by these shirkers of life? There is no such thing as free love, love detached, floating in the air, blown out by a feminist breath. As soon as love arises between friends or between the sexes it is automatically fettered. It is centred upon one person. Not even that vague emotion known as the love of Humanity is free. It is only diffuse. Sacrifice of self is an inevitable condition of human love. Why talk about it? Why exhaust mind and heart in a useless strife against it? Love is a good thing, and friendship is a better, but neither survive being thought of too long or too deeply. And both, for their continuance, demand a gift of spirit, of personality, what you will, from one lover to the other. In life, as in love, there are only two ways. A man may either stand still and regard his navel, or accept the conditions of living among men and master them. The unattainable freedom for which these dreamers yearn is the freedom of annihilation, the Absolute Nothingness of the mystic. The great mystics of the world have mounted, in agony of soul and mind, to a realisation of unity with the Divine. These latter-day 'profundists' run wildly round repudiating chains, and remain in the valley. They desire emancipation from living. The repressions demanded of her thinkers and writers by the political and social conditions of Russia, take their toll from weakness as from strength. These weaklings, their feet fettered, dream of freedom from oppression, and then, passing in imagination beyond that limited vision, they realise that no unloosing of social chains can free them, that nothing is free that must eat to live, that desires affection and to meet with men. They live in the mind, and thought was ever a two-edged sword in the hands of a prisoner.

It would be unwise and unjust to deny life to the modern Russian drama. There is probably no theatre into which has gone so much thought and care. The activity of the scenic artists is not wanting to the playwrights. But it is an activity that feeds upon itself. The delight in pain and death, the worship of fierce passion and pale women is one side of sexual degeneration. Pain is not beautiful: only saints and decadents believe it to be so. Possibly the saint and the decadent are sides of the same medal. Both have wrought considerable mischief in the world. The activity of the new Russian drama is undeniable. Modern, classical, historical plays, fairy fantasies, symbolism, all are tried. One dramatist will attempt a hundred forms. Plays, in which the characters are personified human qualities, jostle plays which are no more than pageants of colour and riots of sound. Regard closely the two, and see whether the dividing line be so wide after all. The symbolists who deal in sound, and the others who deal in spectacular effects may be found to differ only in the degree of effect. The kind is the same. When Nicholas Evreinov sets a play in which the stage is the human heart, and the characters are the various selves of a man, he is doing precisely the same thing as Gorki did in *The Night Shelter*. In the doss-house men and women speak the thought and reveal the souls of the characters. In the scene that is supposed to be a man's heart, the thoughts speak for themselves through the actor who personifies them. We get not a whit nearer the human spirit though the cavortings of the three selves in *The Theatre of the Soul* than we do through the words and deeds of the wretches in the hovel. We do not indeed get so near, since we are distracted by the arbitrary limiting of the number of selves. If a man has more than one self, he has surely a thousand rather than three. But the point is this. The use of arbitrary symbols, the creation of characters who are labelled, Beauty, Truth, the Ideal, or The Wife, or Bread, and the use of colour to symbolise changes of emotion and mood are as spectacular as a Punch and Judy show, and less entertaining. Hence the extraordinary flourishing in the Russian theatre of the spectacle and the so-called symbolic play side by side. In many plays are found together a revelling in colour and gorgeous trappings, with a symbology often worthless.

Feodor Sologub

Feodor Sologub is perhaps the cleverest of the decadents. In *Vanka the Seneschal and Jehan the Page*, and in *Night Dances*, he plays with the charm of strange words, heavy fragrance, and exotic forms. Here is music, exquisite sensation, and here also nothing of life, no truth and no inspiration. It were incongruous to call a critical anger on these wonderful puppets. They are nothing more than delicate tapestry on a wall by which life passes, unheeding. *Night Dances* is the tale of the princesses whose slippers are worn out every morning. On the poet who discovers their secret dancing, the king of the underworld bestows a golden cup, to be handed down to the race of poets and dreamers after him. The stairway that leads to the Ideal is blocked up, but the divine inspiration through which man catches a glimpse of the lost country is in the poet's hands. The dramatist has nailed a thought on to the old pretty tale of the dancing princesses, and the result is a modern symbolic play. The thought is of doubtful value, but its expression is in phrases of exquisite felicity. It is a net sewn with stars.

Wherever this charm of expression fails, the arbitrary symbolism appears stark and stiff-jointed, and the relationship with Punch and Judy is plainer. *The Triumph of Death* is an infelicitous play. It has a pompous preface.

'The author of the tragedy has changed his mask for a half-mask, but does not yet reveal his face. He wishes to be recognised by his smile, curving at the corners of his lips.

'But if he should not be recognised . . .

'By means of all the words he can find he speaks of one of the same thing. Towards one and the same thing he calls unheedingly.

'But if he should not be heard . . .

'Are not his poems beautiful? Is not his prose fragrant? Is he not the master of the charms of words obedient to him?

'He smiles, and passes by, wrapped in a dark mantle, and she is with him—she, the serpent-eyed.'

There is a Prologue in which beauty, the Ideal Beauty of the poet's vision, in the form of a sewing maid is rejected by king and poet and lover. The play itself is another version of the same idea, that the creative force of beauty, always stirring for realisation, is always rejected and always deathless. The beautiful Algista usurps the throne by a trick, and the ugly Queen is sent away. Algista is discovered, cast out, and beaten almost to death. She rises and calls on the King to follow her.

'With all the power of my immeasurable love, with all the strength of my unendurable torments, with all my will exulting over life and over death, I have brought from the earth, the heavens, and the dark underground world, your body, your soul, and your midnight shadow. Here I am before you, scarcely dead, scarcely breathing, scarcely smouldering, in a fearful wavering at the cross-roads, my blood in the damp earth, and my voice calling to the witching moon —and I am calling to you: come to me, choose our way to life or to death, as you will; come with me, love me—or remain here, but also with me, with me dead. Love me, my lord and husband, for ever mine, love me.'

He will not listen and is turned to stone before her dead body. Once more the Ideal Beauty is rejected, and once more triumphant.

It is a shadow play, and to each shadow the dramatist has given a meaning: one is Love, one Beauty, one Ugliness, one Death. Together they make their gestures and say their pieces to set out the whole idea. Their only value is in the idea. Is it not strange that a Foreword, a Prologue, a Play, and all those puppets were needed for its expression? There is an inner meaning in the most realistic of Sologub's plays. To convey it his characters must sometimes do and say incomprehensible things. That often they say them in delicate and wonderful words makes them none the less symbolic ghosts, blown across the stage on a poet's breath.

This same spectacular symbolism has its counterpart in the experiments of the scenic artists who attempt to create settings that interpret and symbolise the dominant motive of the drama. Whereas the symbolism of the playwright is often as arbitrary as that of M. Mæterlinck in *The Blue Bird*, the selection of this dominant motive is arbitrary in a more subtle sense, depending largely on the temperament of the director. The well-known work of Meyerhold as theatre director is curiously typical of the two-sided character of the latter-day Russian drama. When he worked at the theatre of Vera Kommissarzhevsky he endeavoured to interpret and emphasise in every way the dominant emotion of each drama, aiming always at unity and simplicity of effect. Later, he tried to draw the audience into this unity of emotion. He set symbolic dramas against a flat, conventional background to make less obvious the barrier between the stage and the auditorium. The actor thus became the sole bridge between the dramatist and his audience. From this Meyerhold arrived at a belief in the supreme importance of the actor, and at the Imperial

Alexandrinsky Theatre he set himself deliberately to emphasise the theatrical character of the performances. The actor remains an actor, playing out a play for the interest of the spectator. The spectator remains vividly conscious of his position as an outsider, an onlooker at the story presented on the stage. Thus Meyerhold came to regard the play as primarily a spectacle, a show.

And together with the show there returned to the theatre a delight in the grotesque, tragedy treading on comedy's heels, the sublime and the mean jostling in the same doorway. Evreinov tried to reproduce the spirit and the plays of the mediæval booths. Kuzmin's plays, full of explanatory angels and an incredible *naiveté*, suggest the work of a cynical modern who wishes to play at being an early Christian. Blok deals in the experiences of the soul and wraps them in an atmosphere of the grotesque. His are all the tricks of the symbolist, the repetition in one act of the surroundings and actions of the previous one, the arrangement of colours in a symbolic procession. In such a play as Andriev's *Black Maskers* the grotesque is at its best. In this play are gathered all the stirring and fermenting elements in the modern Russian theatre. It is symbolic with the best of them. It is as spectacular as Marlowe. It revels in colour as wantonly as Bakst, and is as full of fantastic things as Bakst's drop-scene for *Hélène de Sparte,* with its leering human and animal faces, crazy temples, mosaic rocks, and delirious colour. It contains at once the early and the late Meyerhold. It is a pageant and a sermon. Before all, it is a series of effects. There is first mediæval romance in the luxurious hall of an ancient castle. Lorenzo, the young duke of Spadoro, and Donna Francesca, his beautiful wife, are awaiting their guests for a masked ball. It is to be of unequalled magnificence. The old tower and the roadway are to flame with light. The guests arrive, heavily masked, with 'strange muffled laughter.' Lorenzo greets them, guessing at their identity.

> 'Was it you, Signor Sandro?'
> 'Signor Sandro is not here. Signor Sandro is dead.'

A red mask with a hideous snake twisted round it answers his greeting—'I am your heart, Lorenzo.' And another, in the form of a repulsive spider—'Is not this your heart, Lorenzo?'

Half-alarmed, he calls his suite round him, and the strange maskers answer mockingly to the names of his servants. More guests come, hideous and deformed. A gray, helpless creature with long legs, coughing and groaning, speaks to him.

> 'Why did you call me from my bed, Lorenzo?'
> 'Where is your bed, Signor?'
> 'In your heart, Lorenzo.'

A mask with the face of a corpse touches him. He talks with it, stirring to keep his sanity: perhaps it is Signor Sandro di Grada keeping up the farce of his death. When he calls his servants, several maskers run up, but they are all alike. He calls his wine-steward. The mask who comes says—'Something is wrong with our wine, Lorenzo. It has turned as red as Satan's blood and it crazes the brain like the poison of a serpent.' Lorenzo insists on tasting it, and it burns his heart. It is a ghastly nightmare in which he struggles, asleep and powerless. The music of the masked musicians is a 'wild melody in which are heard malicious laughter, cries of agony and despair, and some one's low, sad plaining.' The musicians assure him that they are playing the music he wrote. Lorenzo imagines that even their tones are masked. 'I was not aware,' he says wildly, 'that tones could put on such repulsive masks.' He speaks to a masked beauty. 'I am your falsehoods, Lorenzo.'

'If you knew Lorenzo's thoughts, his clear, pure thoughts . . .' His protest is interrupted by a formless, legged thing—'We are your thoughts.'

'We are your overlords, Lorenzo. This castle is ours.' He is already half-crazed. He calls his wife, and one after another three masked ladies present themselves as Donna Francesca.

'Now it is my wife who is lost. Laugh, my dear guests. I had a wife. They called her Donna Francesca, and I have lost her. What a strange jest.'

The mask in the form of a spider creeps up and begs him to go up into the tower. 'Something is entangled in the spider web, and waits for you there. But is your sword sharp, Lorenzo?' The bewildered man runs a few steps upstairs, and then, clutching at his self-possession, comes down again. He will have his singer sing the song he wrote. The song grows wilder and wilder.

'In the black depths of my heart I shall erect a throne to you, Satan. In the black depths of my thought I shall erect a throne to you, Satan. Divine, immortal, almighty, from now on and for ever hold sway over the soul of Lorenzo, happy, insane Lorenzo.'

The terrible guests taunt him. 'Did your mother tell you whose son you were?'

Now Lorenzo is in the library, poring over papers that prove him to be the son of the Queen and a vile groom. Another Lorenzo rushes in and kills him.

The ball goes on. But the guests are jostled and terrified by hairy black maskers who creep unsteadily about. 'They fly toward the light,' says one. 'The light begat us.'

'All the darkness of the night is transformed into living creatures and from every side they are coming hither.' The hall is full of black maskers: they blot out the light and the fire. Lorenzo tries to laugh, but his face is turned to stone. It is the mask he wears that is stiff and unyielding. He puts up his hand to tear it off. There is no mask.

Lorenzo is lying in his coffin. The other Lorenzo stands beside it, listening while the peasants talk to the corpse, forgiving it, one a ruined daughter, another a murdered son, a third his trampled corn. Drunken servants reel in and insult the body. Donna Francesca weeps over it. Lorenzo bids it remain still.

Is there a need to follow the fantasy to its feverish end? The brain reels and the eyes roll. Make what you can of it, my masters. It will be all one to Lorenzo, admonishing his corpse.

A symbolism that is no more than the deft arrangement of decorative figures, a delight in vivid colour, fantastic play of contrasts, wonderful effects: here you have in one play the diverse features of the later Russian drama. Andriev is not alone. Sologub is as spectacular as he is symbolic, as theatrical as he is poetic. Nicholas Evreinov makes a puppet show of the human spirit, and a spiritual vision of a puppet show. Meyerhold progresses from a determined symbolism to as determined a theatricality.

Nicholas Evreinov

Evreinov should have separate criticism. His restless intellect has driven him along a hundred paths. He experimented in mediæval plays and settings at the Old Time and Merry Theatres: he is a theorist in the art of the theatre, and an audacious producer. Of his many plays, *The Merry Death* is at once a technical masterpiece and a fine drama. The philosophic spirit that informs it wears a double mask. The comic mask hides a mocking and silver-tongued critic, the tragic mask laughs at life and at man whose days are as a shadow that declineth. Harlequin is a very gallant gentleman.

'Don't cry, Columbine! I shall go away with a smile on my lips. I want to die as people want to sleep, when it's late and they're tired and need rest. I've sung all my songs! I revelled all my merriment. I've laughed all my laughter! My strength and health have been joyfully spent with my money. I was never mean, and so was always merry and sorrowless. I am Harlequin and shall die Harlequin. Don't cry, Columbine! Rather be glad that I'm dying, not like others, but full of delight, content with fate and my conduct. Or would you rather see me grappling to life with greedy eyes and a prayer on my lips? No, Harlequin is not like that.'

The Merry Death takes rank with the great Russian comedies. Evreinov has written no other play which approaches its standard of excellence, and his latest work shows a gradual failing of dramatic power.

His theories of stage-craft have led him into rather barren fields. There have been, not only in Russia, many attempts to reproduce the spirit of unity which existed in early Greek drama between the actor and the spectator. At the theatre of Vera Kommissarzkevsky Meyerhold tried to establish a spiritual harmony between the stage and the audience. He played M. Mæterlinck's symbolic drama against a background of which the flatness and simplicity tended to minimise the sense of division between stage and auditorium. The onlooker felt himself a sharer in the emotions symbolised on the stage. Sologub, in his *Theatre of* *the Single Will* looks for the theatre to become again a temple, a high place of the mysteries. Whereas now the people run to see a spectacle,

> 'the hour will come when, in the transcendence of body and spirit, we shall come together in liturgical ceremony, in sacramental rites.'

Reinhardt tried to unite actor and onlooker in one rush of emotion. Evreinov, starting from a belief in the possibility of an imaginative unity between stage and audience, evolved his Monodrama, in which all that happens on the stage happens to one person, to the Ego. It is the spectator himself who lives and acts on the stage. He is no longer asked to watch the varying features of several characters, distracted by their multiplicity of appeal. He is himself the principal character, and the events and all the other characters are seen through his eyes and his changes of mood. The Ego of the drama is the visible projection on to the stage of the self of the onlooker.

It is clear in the first place that the creation of this illusion of unity depends for its success largely upon mechanical means. The Ego looking at his wife sees her at one moment as an angel of light, at the next as a bad-tempered harridan, and the first image must disappear as the second appears. To create this effect of a rapid transition from mood to mood, Evreinov makes use of clever scenic devices. He is compelled to produce his imaginative effects by a cinematographic illusionism. There is, therefore, in his Monodrama, an underlying contradiction, always present, always tending to set up division in the place of the desired unity.

And further, the effect which Evreinov hoped to attain is not only difficult of achievement: it is ultimately impossible It is impossible for the onlooker at a performance of any kind to merge his identity in the identity of the performers. He cannot pass beyond the limits of his personality to become part of the personality presented on the stage. The consciousness of division, of the distinction between the I and the not-I is perpetually present. He may, in the common phrase, forget himself, to the extent of being moved by the emotions simulated by the performers. A sensuous dance may rouse his physical passion, a tragic scene bring tears to his eyes. In either case his emotions are not identified with the emotions conveyed by the gestures and voices of the actors : they centre round objects and feelings peculiar to himself. The only possible unity between performers and spectator is the religious unity of the early Greek drama, when actor and spectator were one in the performance of an act of worship. The clear and simple assumption underlying that unity can never return to the world. All attempts to reproduce it are based ultimately upon external trickery, the skill of the producer and the actor, or the power and willingness of the spectator in imaginative self-deception. They are innately false.

Nor is it in any way desirable that the spectator should in imagination leap on to the stage and live through the trials of the Ego. A man should not lightly abandon himself to the sway of casual emotions. The demand of the Monodrama is, in fact, an impertinent invasion of personality, comparable only to the exhausting demands made on the emotions of the defenceless and unguarded listener at Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*.

Burrowing inwards to their own souls, the later dramatists of Russia have drawn therefrom an amazing and varied treasure. And since the human soul cannot feed upon itself for ever, the signs of strain and exhaustion are not wanting, clearer in some playwrights than in others. Theirs is the other side of the deep discontent that led Tchekhov to a vision of life, and Gorki to the belief in a new race created by man's own effort. Symbolists and decadents alike, weary of the eternal problem, have given up the search for an answer, traitors to the artistic tradition of their country.

Leonid Andriev

One dramatist alone has made a show of following it. Leonid Andriev has been mystic, realist, romantic, and always a contriver of effects and sensations. His imagination is that of an Eastern story-teller. His plays are a succession of striking scenes : colour, fantasy, mystery, terror, joy, crowd upon each other and are arranged by a master hand. He is a supreme creator of the spectacular in the theatre. His symbolic plays are no shadowy, half-held visions. They are conceived in primary colours, and filled with bold and vivid details. He has attempted to make drama of the activities of the soul, and the result has been a pageant of terrible or gorgeous effects. In *King Hunger* the voices of the oppressed are the inarticulate cries of misery and sin. A woman who drowned her baby, a child who knows the lowest depths of suffering and vice, a starving, hunger-crazed multitude, and by their side the insane revelling of the rich.

In *The Life of Man* the supernatural forms a background and a chorus to the natural. A Being in Gray speaks a prologue. Old women, crouching and chuckling, comment on the screams of a woman in childbirth.

''Tis more like the howl of a wild beast now.'

'The cries sound as though her neck were being twisted round and round.'

'Dying or about to be delivered, she has nearly come to the end of her strength now.'

The Man is born: the Being in Gray lights the candle that he holds, and stands listening to the chatter of the relatives. He is there, unseen by the Man, throughout the play.

One third of the candle is burned away. The man and his wife have nothing to eat but they rejoice in their youth and their dreams, and the Man flings an intolerant challenge to Life.

Two-thirds of the candle are gone. In their wonderful mansion the Man and his wife are giving a ball. Among their noble friends creep envious and cunning enemies

There is only a stump of candle left now. Poverty has come on the Man. His mansion is a ruin, and the only servant left is an old woman. Their young son, full of life and eager for living, is injured by a chance blow. There is a pitiful play over his toys. He dies and the Man curses God.

'By the head of this woman whom thou hast wounded, and by the body of this child whom thou hast slain, I curse thee—ay, I, the man.'

The Man is dying. A company of drunkards rave horribly in the desolate room. The mysterious old women who were present at his birth have come to watch his death. As the candle flickers out they go through the travesty of a dance. The Being in Gray holds the stage. 'Silence ye . . . A man is dead!' The darkness thickens. Yells and laughter split the shadows. Then 'silence, absolute, unbroken silence.'

The 'iron round of destiny' is finished. The Man has fought and been beaten, and Andriev has made a very good show out of his struggles. Why a Being in Gray? Why not? It looks as well as anything else if you must bring a flesh and blood Fate on to the stage, and it is obviously correct to give him a candle as a symbol of mortal life. It is all a question of effect, when once you have decided to make a circus of our puny human striving and its foreseen end in death.

One more illustration. *Anathema* was the dramatic success of 1910, preached against, discussed everywhere, and finally prohibited. At first sight it appears a search for the purpose of life. The problem is presented, not in the spirit of the drama nor in the rhythm of its action, but directly, in the form of two men : Anathema, the scientist's demand for intellectual satisfaction; David Leizer, the blind faith of religion. The artifice of the emotional scenes is too plainly the work of a mechanical playwright who must have his effects at whatever cost to art and reality. Anathema seeks an answer to the riddle of the universe, but the eternal lips are closed before his restless doubt. Tortured by intellectual dissatisfaction, he looks for answer in the love of David. He makes him rich, but riches can neither save his son's life nor his daughter's soul. He helps him to give all he has to the poor, and when all is gone, the mob pursue them and stone David. Thereupon, secure in his insolence, Anathema insults the deity, calling him impostor, blind tormentor of humanity. He is told that David has been saved by his faith, but neither mind nor soul are satisfied with the assertion. Unconvincing as a philosophic treatise, the play is a complete failure as drama. The dramatist does not believe in his own problem : he is merely concerned to give his play an appearance of deep thought. He is a dramatic impostor; and in his work is neither life nor reality. Not Andriev, nor the chaos of symbolism and decadent art keep alive the spirit of Russian drama. That, in the absence of a dramatist, is left to the Moscow Art Theatre. There, a weariless patience and intellect are keeping for the theatre the memory and the vision of a high art.

With Russia and the drama of Tchekhov we end our study of modern European drama. As we saw the rise of the earlier movement to its height in Strindberg, of the later and wider movement to its height in Ibsen, so we have seen the descent of the first to the neurotic weakness of *Nan*, of the second to the undramatic work of M. Brieux, and the more worthless efforts of Mr Brighouse and his like. We have seen the steady reaction against it, and the poverty of that reaction's accomplishment; we have seen the promise of the south; and more significant than these, a symbol of the future in the glory of Hofmannsthal, and the charming patience of Tchekhov's art.

CHAPTER V

A SUMMARY

THE drama of realism was born of its age. Throughout, unable to lead, it has followed the spirit of the age. Its tragedies reflected contemporary pessimism, not the courageous pessimism of Matthew Arnold, but the pitiful resignation of incompetence or the weakness of little souls who force their disillusion and suffering on all life. The drama turned to the gray side of life while poets were still ignoring it, treating of tragedy and despair, and but rarely of the sordid baseness of an underworld. The verse of Mr Masefield stands now where the drama of the naturalist stood more than thirty years ago. Again, the drama of realism has reflected the scientific tendencies of the nineteenth century, adopting a determinist psychology that has degraded man, enslaving him to his past and his environment.

Popular scientific exposition of ethics, sociology and psychology are everywhere in it. Mr Barker once demanded a drama on the Minority Report of the Poor Law Commission.

I do not protest against reality, but against that false conception of it which believes it possible to achieve an image of life by adding together a mass of facts. Ibsen and Strindberg, masters of reality, were so because they did not record life; they possessed it, forcing on its facts their sense of its meaning. The best of their followers have failed to create a new form, or to achieve their spiritual greatness. The intellectual power of Mr Shaw's drama has become mere journalistic cleverness; the passion of the reformer has ended in M. Brieux' artistic incompetence. And the worst of those who came after Ibsen and Strindberg have reduced their vision to an unimaginative chaos. Their plays are mere imitations of life, and as such a confession of creative impotence. Unable to give to life the power and beauty of an ordered vision, these playwrights have stolen disjointed facts and phrases to manufacture their plays. They have copied since they could not create, and called the copy Art and Drama. Their plays have no significance for life, for that is the gift of the imagination; no inspiration, for that comes only from the creative spirit. They claim to take all life for the purpose of their play-making. And their claim is thoroughly presumptuous; experience is cheap, but the power to give it meaning and value is rare. 'Experience,' said the wise Erasmus, 'is the common schoolhouse of fools and ill men.' Experience to the latter-day realist is sufficient warrant for rushing on to the stage his record of stupid lives and little people.

The value of the drama of realism that followed Ibsen has been threefold. It expressed the life of its age, the best substitute it could offer for the transcendence and interpretation of it. In its highest form it has been destructive of false sentiment and romance, of intellectual and moral cowardice. This is its greatest achievement. And finally, it has become the clearing-house for broken ideals and worn-out artistic faiths, leaving the way open for the future.

The reaction against this dominant realism did not escape the influence of the forces which made it dominant; and the symbolic drama accepted its view of man as slave of heredity and circumstance. Nor have the symbolists achieved any worthy revolt. For the artistic poverty of an imitative realism and the incompetence of a pessimistic and ugly realism, they offer the puppets of a false mysticism or the hopeless peace of a forced resignation. With the exception of Rostand and Hofmannsthal, the purely romantic drama has turned from an imitation of nature to the absurdly unnatural hiding from reality in a determined illusion.

The signs of dramatic change are clear. They are in Hofmannsthal's attempt at a new form expressive of the subconscious meaning and emotional changes of the action; and in Tchekhov's faltering rhythm of life. They are in the art of the Theatre itself; in the work of Reinhardt at the Deutsches Theater, a development of Wagner's efforts to mould music, action and setting into an organic whole; in the decorative work of M. Rouché at the Théâtre des Arts; in the Kunstler Theater at Munich; in the work of Herr Linnebach at the New Court Theatre in Dresden; in the consummate art of the Moscow Art Theatre; in the unity of line and colour in the Russian ballet. All methods of advance have a common principle; the desire to create a rhythmical harmony between the parts of the drama, to mould action, character and setting into a continuous whole, expressive of the dominant motive of the play. The setting should not imitate the external surroundings of the action, but, by selection and suggestion, should emphasise and interpret its spirit. In the hands of a few German artist-directors the art of the theatre has become a subtle and expressive thing. Their insistence on line, their skill in the arrangement of masses, their sense of colour, and above all, their masterly use of light, has placed their work far ahead of the standard reached in any other country. The only English scenic artist of European standing is Gordon Craig, and in spite of his much talk of the beauty of motion, his own work is largely static. The colossal curtains that dwarf his puny Hamlet swallow up also the movement of the play. He has no very vivid sense of colour. And he has not appreciated the extraordinary possibilities of lighting. Light can bind together the diverse elements of a scene, it can make more subtle and expressive the gestures and movements of the actors, it can give life and a soul to the inanimate structure of the setting; it can suggest as nothing else can, the most subtle changes in the emotional and spiritual progress of the drama. It is a dynamic force in the theatre.

There is much in this Art of the Modern Theatre for profound admiration. There is also something for deprecation. Something even for distrust in the promise of theatres endowed by earnest souls for the production—doubtless—of earnest plays. Heaven forbid that one should seek to belittle the talent and energy of the hard-working promoters of People's Theatres, Art Theatres, and the like. The horrid fear remains that when the new drama arrives and is invited to enter the beautiful new cradles it will uncompromisingly decline.

The truth is that there is no great drama because there are no great dramatists.

The inconvenience or ugliness of the theatres is a side issue. Fine plays are not yet to be conjured up by a new system of lighting, however magnificent, or the theatres of Russia, Germany, and America would be filled with dramatic master-works.

Neither is it to be conjured up by meeting together in societies to encourage the production of Strindberg or Evreinov, or a genius from Hampstead or Chelsea.

If a drama must be encouraged by such desperate efforts there is something wrong with it. It is not offering to modern life enough to make its gifts acceptable. It is not credible that the people crowd to music-halls and neglect Ibsen because they are all fools and unenlightened. It is much more likely that there is something wrong with Ibsen.

The realist drama was imprisoned in a scientific and rationalist philosophy. Ibsen regarded human motives as fixed in nature and magnitude, determining by their mutual reactions the next and all future states of mind. His characters are slaves to their past: Rosmer, Rebecca West, Solness, all slaves. They are incapable of adapting to a new order of life. The drama of his followers lies beneath the same weight. The characters of Mr Shaw's plays, of Mr Barker's plays, of Hauptmann's realist plays are strictly limited by their environment. Life, for the characters of this realist drama, is a matter of individual circumstance and natural law.

Modern philosophy has emerged from this prison house. Or more truly—the human mind has emerged, and proceeds now to spin its philosophies in the sun. And if philosophies must be spun, better in the sun than anywhere else. They look better and do less harm.

This emergent mind has rediscovered a faith in the glory of the human spirit. It is, however, quite impossible that the drama should express this glory in Shakespearean or classic terms. Shakespeare, whether played before a black curtain, on a red and blue tiled floor, or staged like a Pears' Annual cover, entirely refuses to adapt itself to modern life. Modern heroism has a superb nonchalance entirely destructive of the blank verse atmosphere.

In the same way, the simplicity of the Greek attitude to religion permitted a Grecian audience to view on the stage a conception of fate that made life quite simple and quite unreal. Even the long-cherished classical belief in an ultimate Reconciliation must perish.

This notion of a final sense of reconciliation to tragedy was foisted on us by the classical critics and æstheticians. We were so often assured that we feel reconciled and uplifted by the smoothing over of the problems and the warring elements at the end of the classic tragedy that we came to believe it. We deceived ourselves.

The terrible scene in the *Medea* where the Chorus beats on the barred door, behind which a woman is murdering her children, hurts and sears for all the beauty of the lyric that follows. Does the descent of the God to clear up the hopeless confusion in the Euripidean *Orestes* reconcile and uplift? Or, if Euripides is not a fair example of classic tragedy, regard Sophocles. Antigone is dead, but 'justice has her home with the gods below.' Is it well, or ill? *The Œdipus?* At the end of his misery Œdipus is welcomed by Theseus: Thebes is striving for the possession of his body; the divine voice itself announces his death, his last resting-place becomes a shrine. Is that recompense enough for the appalling spectacle of human wretchedness?

For the classic dramatist the world lay under divine laws 'begotten in the serene heights of heaven.' The final triumph of justice was certain. 'The gods, though slow, are sure in visiting crime, when men abandon godliness and turn to evil.' The modern mind surveys the universe and finds it anything but friendly. There are no longer interested gods on Olympus to descend and straighten out the tangle, handing Hermoine to Orestes, Elektra to Pylades.

There are no rewards in heaven for pain and virtue on earth. The eternal moral order of the world dwells no longer in the region of the Ideal, unshaken by the fever and tumult of men's struggles.

The result to the early modern theatre of this loss of faith in a universal friendliness was the birth of the savagely naturalist play, and the attempts to evade the problem in a furtive romance. Out of the darkness came a solitary defiance—'Why should not your life be intolerable?' I know of no modern tragedy that has fully expressed this defiance in the face of acknowledged defeat. Strindberg attempted it in *The Dance of Death* and failed.

Modern thought, releasing man from the weight of heredity and his own past, has reminded him that he lives to direct life. To this undying human purpose defeat is impossible, and tragedy a thing to stir the blood and harden the will.

In the ancient dramas, kings fell, but the crash woke no echo outside the palace. Agamemnon was murdered and the curse worked itself out on the Atridæ alone. When Henry Trebell dies, the tragedy lies not only in his death but in the waste of energy and faith of his plans for the race. The ripples of his death widen to the slum and the cottage. And by way of this wider view of life and death the modern dramatist may look over the top of tragedy to the immortality of the human spirit. The man dies, and we are not reconciled to the waste of his life, but his thought has lit up the darkness, and his hand has advanced the road a little farther. Even among the human wreckage of the *Night Shelter* Satine knows that man is better than the life he sees around him.

The artistic forces in the theatre have gone far. The impulse to make the theatre a part of the life of the people is at its beginning. I do not speak of the unproductive attempts to simulate a unity of spirit between stage and audience. From the time when the Elizabethan citizen and his wife intruded on the stage itself, we have arrived at a time when the theatres are built solely for the convenience of wealth. This is true of all save a very few. It is possible that the Schiller Theatre and the New Free Folk Stage in Berlin are signs of a future when the theatre will be an integral part of the life of the nation, and not an excrescence on it. Changes in the social order will necessarily affect the drama. A society built on slavery means a theatre directed first of all to the amusement of the slaves. A free society, a society of the Humanities, may give birth to a theatre of the Humanities. This is a time of destruction, of search for a new vitality. The drama of ideas has failed: its last phase the drama of small sexual problems. Protest against these sex plays is not a plea for the exclusion of passion from the drama. There is sufficient passion in *The Tempest*, but how much sex?

And do not mistake—the finest drama is of necessity a symbolic drama. That is why it is impossible to forgive the poverty-stricken allegory that has masqueraded as symbolism in the modern theatre.

The incalculable power exercised over the minds of men by symbols becomes apparent at once from the briefest reflection on the Christ symbol.

We live from day to day. It is clear that beyond the harassing pressure of the day's needs lies an ideal future of the race to which—unconsciously—we strive.

We go to town in tube trains, we snatch at papers and discuss the leader, we sit on committees, we dine and quarrel and sleep and—to what end? Merely to live?

It would not be worth it.

We do all these ludicrous things because of a blind belief in the ultimate worth of our lives. We do actually believe that we are getting somewhere. We act according to the bidding of a super-conscious personality which assures us that there is more in life than the fret of the senses. We stumble after a truth and a beauty we have only dimly conceived—or never conceived.

If we have guessed at it at all, if we have held it however fleetingly, it is only as a vision—a symbol—half caught in some ill-explored region of the mind. We live and act in the mysterious influence radiated by these symbols of an ideal future. As we dream to-day, men will live to-morrow, though we do not recognise our dreams and can give no account of them. To-morrow sleeps in each man's brain. If he can be roused to interest in it, so much the better for him and it.

In this lies the supreme value and power of the drama. It can create interest in the unachieved grandeur, the undeveloped powers of man. With a sharper touch than any other art it can quicken into life the realities that wait beyond and above the confusion of the day. It can set before men's eyes a conception of life which is better and nobler than its present attainment. It can make move before him the dreams that lie hidden in his thought—the dreams that, though he know it not, make possible and worthy the daily futilities of existence.

Man's mind sends out groping tendrils into the unseen future that will engulf alike his struggle and his failure, at once explaining and taking form from them. It is for the drama to see that these tendrils of his mind find something upon which they can fasten, something that is as noble as man's ideals and as human as his achievements.

In God's name do not let us have a drama with its head among the stars unless its feet are firmly planted on the earth.

'The sense of life is not in self-satisfaction; after all, man is better than that. . . . The sense of life is in the beauty and the force of striving towards some aim; every moment of being ought to have some higher aim.'

'Confess you don't know how to represent life, so that your pictures of it shall provoke in a man a redemptive spirit of shame and a burning desire of creating new forms of life. . . . Can you accelerate the pulsation of life? Can you inspire it with energy, as others have done.'

'When will you, then, speak of the "rebel spirit," of the need for the new birth of the spirit? Where is, then, the calling to the creation of a new life? Where the lessons of courage? Where the words which would give wings to the soul?'

'Can you awake in man a laughter full of the joy of life and at the same time elevating to the soul? Look, men have quite forgotten good wholesome laughter!'

(GORKI—*A Reader.*)

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